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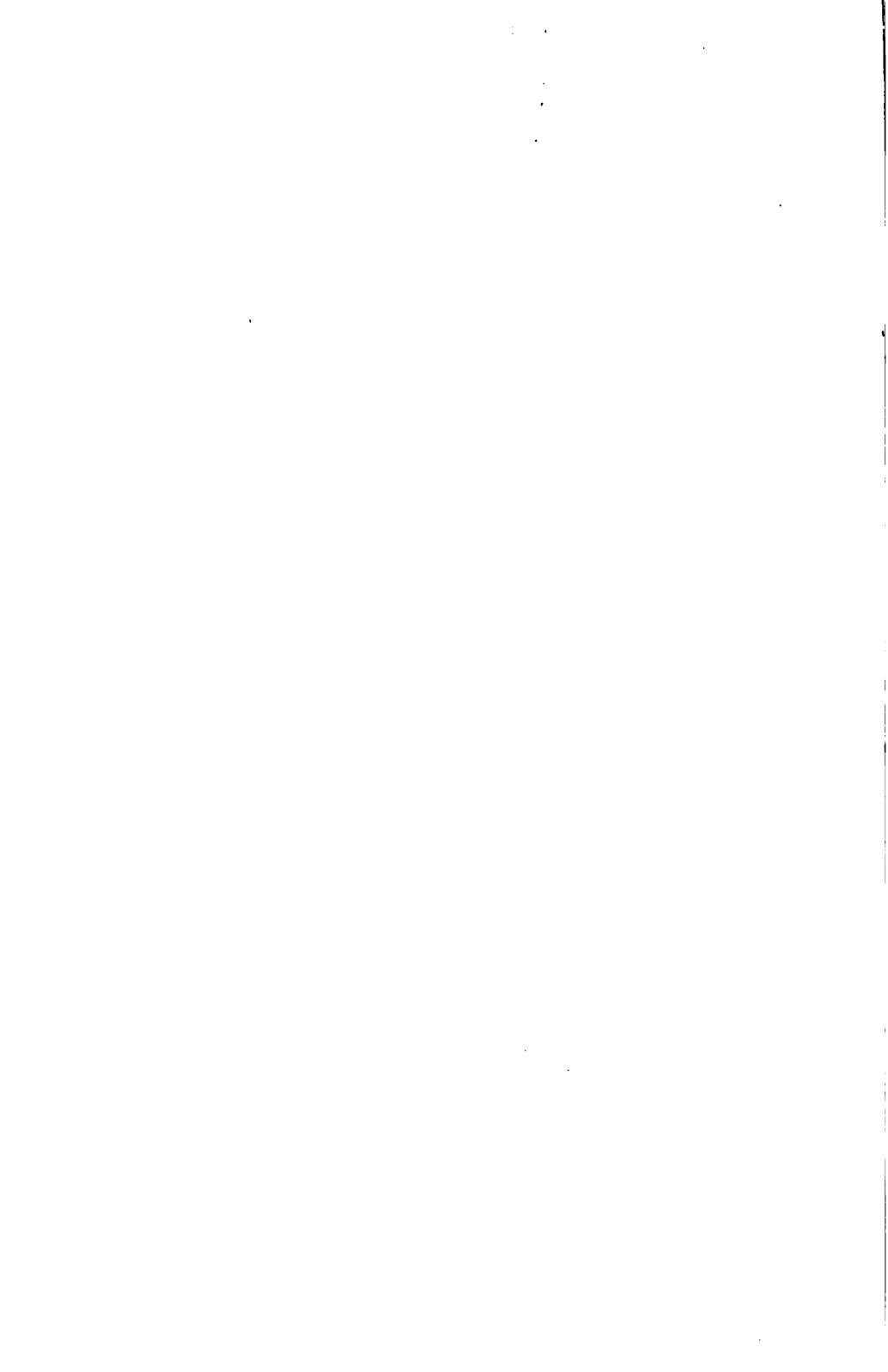
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**ACTIONS AND REACTIONS
IN RUSSIA**



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ACTIONS AND REACTIONS IN RUSSIA

BY

R. SCOTLAND LIDDELL

AUTHOR OF

“ON THE RUSSIAN FRONT”
“THE TRACK OF THE WAR”

WITH 16 ILLUSTRATIONS

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*By the kindness of Mr. Clement K. Shorter, of the
"SPHERE," I am permitted to include here several con-
tributions to his journal.—R. S. L.*

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DISCARDED

TO
MY FATHER

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ACTIONS AND REACTIONS IN RUSSIA

CHAPTER I

MONOTONE

THERE is a sameness about this war. Battles are very much alike. Artillery, certainly : machine guns, rifles, hand-grenades and bayonets. Shells of varied calibre : shrapnel bursting high and low ; bullets and bombs ; occasionally a mine. Aeroplanes, too—of course of different design ; but when they fly so high up in the sky, they all look quite alike. The weather changes, and the seasons change, but the war remains the same.

There is a sameness about the trenches. Our Russian lines are all alike. Pine wooden trench supports ; sand-bags and works of earth ; narrow loop-holes for rifles and broader ones for *mitrailleuses* ; and outside, westwards, zigzagging obstacles of wire. We see the enemy's domain. It looks to us just as our lines must look to him. We see his sand-bags and his heaped-up earth. We see the slits through which his bullets come. Although the enemy we do not see, we know his eyes are turned on us, while ours are fixed on where he is.

There is a sameness in the land behind the Russian lines. The shell-pocked plains ; the broken woods ; the *derevni* where soldiers live. These villages are grey and built upon a single plan. Each *izba* has its roof of thatch, its walls of rough tree trunks. Each *izba*

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has its littered yard, and each its *sarei*—stable and coop and byre and barn in one. But the cottages and all the *sariev* are barracks now. Each village has its *korodtzev*—its deep-dug wells, with a great wooden lever, the *jouravel*, erected like a giant fishing-rod beside each one. Then there are the dug-outs, too, roofed with earth and turf. There are the cooking-wagons of the regiments. There are the men—resting, or eating from their blackened ration pans, or lined up for a drill. One enters such a village once—then one finds all the others are the same.

There is a sameness in the rough cart-tracks. Wide, rutted roads that widen as each week goes by. Rain falls—the roads are churned to mud—and then the drivers seek a better way and turn their horses' heads towards the rutless ground. Some fields are all a track. Reserve trenches lie unevenly across the land. Barbed wire is ready, too, with gaps where traffic may pass through and nearby trestle-gates of wire to close them if need be. Shell wagons pass daily to and fro. Four horses—six—or even eight are yoked to every one. Wagons of bread, and ugly carcasses of meat: wagons of hay tied up in bales, or corn in leaking sacks; wagons of wire and staves and planks of wood—one sees them every day. And men—in ones and twos and companies and regiments. They march across these tracks behind the lines. There is a sameness about them all.

There is a sameness about the wounded. The monotony of war is this: guns and munitions and men, and broken land—and dead—and wounded soldiers. . . . The great coats splashed with blood and torn with shot: the bandages that look so doubly clean: the tired, grimed faces—how very much alike all are. Some men have greater wounds than others. Some have legs hurt, and some are injured in the arm: some have their heads bound up, others have body wounds. But one does not consider this. The place of wound, also its gravity, are merely indirect. The point one thinks of at the war is that this man is hurt—is that he cannot fight—is that another man must come to fill his place. Ten wounded, one may say, or ten times ten; other details are not for us to know. Let doctors fight with Death to save their charge: let nurses guard him night and

day : the future of the soldier rests with God—the vital fact is :—*We must have another man.* . . .

And the sum total of this sameness is usually the same—the situation remains unchanged.

II

I find that it is difficult to write of war. What can I say that I have not already said ? I have written of battles on the Russian Front. My words will stand : I need but change the dates. I have written of the thunder of the guns : to-night I hear just such a thunder as I write. Two years ago the rifle volleys that I heard went “pup-pup-pup,” like potatoes boiling in a pan : they sound like that from where I sit to-night. Two years ago the machine-guns stuttered “chug-chug-chug-chug,” like a motor-bicycle ; to-night they stutter just the same. Two years ago the No-Man’s Land was lit with rocket fire ; if I go to my door I will see the lights that I have seen each night upon the Russian Front.

When I have been in Petrograd, my friends have questioned me about the war. They think that I, fresh from the Front, have very much to tell.

“Now, let us hear your news,” they say, and wait expectantly.

“Why,” I reply, “you know much more than I.”

And that is true. What do we know of history at the Front ? Nothing—or nearly nothing. Hardships of war we know : and suffering, and sometimes thrills and sometimes nervousness. But when we want to know the news, we have to wait until the papers come.

“A Zeppelin was here last week,” one officer remarks.

“Yes ?” we say, indifferently.

The officer reads some other paragraphs.

“Did you see it ?” someone asks after a while.

“What ?”

“Zeppelin.”

“No. Didn’t know it was there.”

We do not doubt official reports : we do not doubt the *Russkie Slovo*’s word : yet none of us who were beneath the track of sky on which the airship rode knew of its

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passing in the night. Glory be to God, as my friend, Nicolai Mihailovitch, would say, we do not know the dangers we live through.

"Well, then," say my friends in Petrograd, "tell us some details. Newspapers don't give us them."

"What sort of details?" One certainly has a varied store of them.

"Battles, of course."

"Artillery," I say wearily. "Aeroplanes directing fire. They drop star signals or paper balloons above our batteries; ours drop star signals or paper balloons above theirs—but I've told you all this before."

"Yes, yes. . . . But what else?"

"Oh," wearily—"shrapnel and maxim guns and rifles. And we lose some men—and they lose some men. We know our losses and we guess theirs: they know their losses and they exaggerate ours. Dead men, of course, and wounded. That's all."

My friends are disappointed. They question me again.

"Oh! for heaven's sake!" I cry, "change the subject. War—war—war! . . . You folk in Petrograd don't seem to have any better subject of conversation. You depress me. Honestly, after a week in town I'm glad to go back to the Front."

"But," they say, "what do you talk about there?"

"Our various love affairs," say I. "We live them once again. . . . Holidays of other summers. Escapades of boyhood. Also what we are going to do when war is over."

"And war?"

"We have enough of that as it is, without needing to talk about it."

III

Of battles it is difficult to write, but of the Russians at war there is very much to say. The Russian Fronts—I write plurally—are not alike. I mentioned in an earlier paragraph the grey *derevni* where the Russian soldiers live when off trench duty. They are the

villages where I am now. They are the villages from Riga down the map to Pinsk. But Russia has an Asiatic Front as well. The Caucasus, where I have been, is Eastern and quite apart. Conditions there are otherwise from those that we have here. The enemy is of another race. The climate on that Asiatic Front has every grade of temperature from Arctic cold to tropic heat. Casualties there include frost-bite and malarial fever. There are dry barren mountains there, while we have marshes here. They have much mutton and sometimes little bread: we have the bread, but sometimes little meat. There is much tempting fruit on that Caucasian Front. There is also cholera. . . .

And Roumania, where I have also been. A British squadron and the Russians fought side by side. Conditions there were yet again unlike. The Russians, and the British, too, sailed to the war on river ships and barges. We also sailed to safety when the moment came. . . . Here, too, the enemy was otherwise. Bulgarian—although we had the Germans and Turks and Austrians, too. Of the Roumanians I do not wish to write. Of Allies—*nil nisi bonum*. . . . But I must tell of one most apt remark. Perhaps it will not be out of place if I write of it here. . . . When Constanza fell and when the enemy was also marching on towards Bucharest, Lieutenant Mitchell, a Canadian officer of the British armoured cars—alas! he is a prisoner of the Bulgars now!—spoke to me somewhat pessimistically.

“God dammit!” he declared in a burst of disgust, “if we have any more Allies, we’re going to lose this war!”

Caucasus or European Front: enemy German or Austrian or Bulgar or Turk: winter or summer, icy-cold or burning hot—the War, as war, remains the same. The stage settings vary, and the characters wear different dress, but the drama of Battle varies not. The actors act almost alike: the guns shout out the self-same words: the orchestra of Death plays its monotonous tune.

But Russia to-day is not the Russia of two years ago. Russia herself has changed miraculously. She has

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broken off her fetters. The Monarchy and all the evil courtiers have gone. Republican Russia : Russia for the Russians ! . . . One cannot overestimate the change. Not only is it a change from bondage to liberty : it is a change from darkness into light.

What a black page of history that former Russian Ministry makes ! Soukhomlinov, whose name spells that tragic want of ammunition of two years ago. The Russian papers have written this : "When Madame Soukhomlinov was buying jewellery and precious stones and rich *toilettes* and all the most expensive luxuries of life, the 20th Corps was dying in the snow. Their artillery was without shells. They had no cartridges for their rifles. Some of the men had no rifles" . . . Stürmer—Herr Stürmer, the Russian papers call him now—who nearly betrayed Russia and the Allies by signing a separate peace. The Germans lost a powerful friend when Stürmer went from office. . . . Protopopov, the former Minister of the Interior, another traitor to his country and his fellow-men. Protopopov, who was responsible for the famine in the towns—the food shortage that brought the public anger to a climax and directly brought about the Revolution. Protopopov has been accused of deliberately starving the towns with the object of provoking the public to an internal war in Russia, to the advantage of the Germans. . . . There were other evil Ministers, too. . . .

And Rasputin, a peasant from Siberia, who made and unmade Ministers. Rasputin the "holy," the decadent leader of the unspeakable orgies of vice of which all Russia talked : the lover of the Russian Court who boasted in his drunken hours of "Sasha," the then Tsarina. The assassination of this religious *poseur* freed Russia of a very evil influence. The same week Moscow actually started a fund for a memorial to the man who was generally supposed to have shot Rasputin ! . . . But that assassination could only have happened in Russia as she was. Rasputin himself could only have happened in the Russia that was before the Revolution came. The Russian papers have written of Rasputin and his intrigues with the ex-Empress. But no English paper could print such filthy and disgusting facts. . . . And all Russia knew that such intrigues

were going on. All Russia had known for some years of the shameful "German" Empress. . . .

I will write a little story that I will call

THE HOLE IN THE ROAD

On the Russian Front, in the long, dreary winter of the second year of the great war, I lived in a one-roomed peasant's hut in a little grey village on a wide bleak plain. A dull, monotonous winter it was—but I have written of that elsewhere.

A dozen versts across a frozen marsh and through a thin pine wood was the nearest railway point. To it came fodder for our horses and food and stores for ourselves, and ammunition. There was a regiment of men housed in our village, and each day a score of army sledges went to fetch the goods that we required. Heavy artillery wagons, too, went almost daily for their load of shells. The track on which the sledges and wagons went was fairly good. Snow and a driving wind had levelled it, and the broad runners of the clumsy sledges had pressed it to the hardness of block ice. The centre of the track was softer. The sharpened shoes of the horses kept cutting it so that it was a path of smallly broken ice. And this was good for the horses' feet, so all was very well.

But there came a thaw. There came warm suns and nights not very cold. The road bent down in places, and rose again. Some stretches were quite switch-backing. Pools of dirty water formed in the wake of our sledge runners, and mud formed where the horses ran. The hollows were deep puddles through which we had to splash. The sun continued and sometimes rain fell, and the surface earth showed in places so that the sledges grated as they ran across. So finally we yoked our wheeled carts once again—with joy because here was the Spring at last : the gloomy winter had gone by.

This thaw meant very much to us. We woke from hibernation to a slight speeding up of war. Also to changes topographical. Our track, for instance, needed altering. The marsh no longer let us go across. Our road was now a semicircle to the wood. Beyond that, close up to the edge, there was a tiny stream. We had

not noticed it before. We found, too, that our plain no longer was a level field. Curves and hollows came to view, and there was a resurrection of shrubs and bushes. . . . The spring track was very bad. Mud!—you cannot think how much there was. Stretches of water, too, so deep in places that half our wheels were sunk in them as we squished through. But still we had to make this track do.

One day I rode on horseback to the railway line. There was a rough bridge, made from fallen firs, across the little stream. And just beyond, my horse swerved at a hole in the road. The wheels of each passing cart had cut into the soft mud and the hole had become deeper and deeper each time. . . . I thought at the moment, “I must remember that hole,” but I rode home a different way that night, a long way round, and I did not trouble any more about it. Two days later I passed across the little bridge again, and I found that the road now led in a deep curve towards the right. The reason was plain. There was the former track—and there the hole where the wheels had sunk. One driver had driven to the right of it, and then another, and so until all carts now travelled on the new-marked way.

“Now,” said I to myself, “that is very interesting. I will watch and see how things go on.”

And I watched . . . I had to ride at least once every week across that road so I saw all developments. The new curve became very muddy, so the drivers drove still more towards the right, but there were some odd trees there, so they had to go still further off the straight to pass them. And even that new track became deep in greasy mud, so the carts went further and still more far afield. At the end of the end—it is a Russian expression—the road had so far cut away from its original line, that the distance to the railway point from where we lived was quite a verst longer than it had been. And much time was wasted, and much energy misspent.

One man, with one spade, in one minute, could have mended the hole in the road. . . .

* * * * *

There you have a parable.

[Photo S

RESERVE SOLDIER SERVANTS WASHING UP.





How we have talked upon the Russian Front! . . . How folks have talked in all the busy Russian towns! . . . And absolutely unanimous we and they have been in all that we and they have said. And yet nothing was done, and things went on as they had been. We faced the enemy upon the Russian Front: we had a greater enemy at our backs.

In March of this year—in March, 1917, of Russian history—we talked and talked about—the state of things. I told my story of the hole.

"And there," said I warmly, "you have the open secret of Russia's trouble. That hole in the road could have been put right in a minute, but no one stopped to alter it. Everyone who passed along that road knew that the hole was there. Everyone knew that it ought to be filled up. Everyone knew that the deepening curve of the road was leading further and further away, and that all could be put right and that the road would run straight and free as it ought to do. Yet no one altered it. Drivers cursed—I'm sure they did! but then they drove away towards the right.

"That road is the road of Russia's progress. There is a hole in it. You go round that hole. You know it is there, you see it, as all the Russian people do, but you do nothing to put things right. You go round—away and away, and God knows where that curving road will lead you all."

My friend Nicolai Mihailovitch nodded.

"We will fill that hole," he said. "Devil knows how many dead citizens will go to level it."

And then we spoke of the Revolution. It was bound to come. All agreed to that. "After the War," they said. After the War the Government would go. And such a revolution would be as would shock the world. All agreed to that.

"A red month is coming," said my friend Nicolai.

And less than two weeks later, the Revolution came, and went. Great Russia was free. And the freedom had been purchased at small cost. There were no towns in flames. There were no great massacres. There were none of the dreadful scenes that folks had prophesied. True, there were some victims, but the num-

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bers were small. Great Russia was victorious. No other victory of hers will ever be so great. . . .

* * * * *

"Red March," soliloquised Nicolai Mihailovitch. He wore republican ribbon on his breast.

"But there has been very little bloodshed!" protested Captain Shikov of the artillery.

Nicolai Mihailovitch smiled a reproof.

"Red March," said he. "I was thinking of roses. . . ."

IV

Roses have thorns. . . . ("Iz vodi v ogon'"), says the Russian proverb. "Out of the water, into the fire."

By a bitter irony, the liberation of Russia from a corrupt Monarchy and a Germanophil Court and Ministry let loose a mob of pacifists and agitators who shouted out for peace. In 1915, and more so in 1916, the country had feared the signing of separate peace papers. The removal of Herr Sturmer (again I am referring to the ex-Minister in the words of the later day Russian Press) caused a sigh of relief throughout the land. The assassination of Rasputin, "the head of the German spy system in Russia," was a joyous event. The overthrow of the pro-German Ministry and the coming of Republicanism were the final moves in the great game to save Russia from everlasting shame. And, by that bitter paradox, the patriots who had saved Russia threw much of the country towards the German side. Ministers had been who wished to betray the Allies in the moment when final success was assured: a populace had been who feared this fatal move. Now came these new Russian Ministers—true patriots—and the mob cried out for peace; extreme Socialists called out against England; Jews cried that the Germans were the real friends of Russia, and whole regiments of men revolted against a continuation of the war.

I was at the Front all the time, so I cannot write of what happened in the towns. But I know what happened in the Russian battle zone, so I will tell of that.

Not all—one cannot tell all, much as one would like to. It was a most nerve-trying time—and still is, as I write. I am commander of a transport here, and I have had my special difficulties. The discipline of former times did not exist. There was very little discipline at all. Certainly, on the surface, there was some respect shown for officers. Soldiers still saluted their chiefs. They still spoke much of the special language of the men to their officers—"Precisely so," instead of "Yes": "Not so, no," instead of "No": "I am not able to know," instead of "I don't know"—but words meant little. Later on there was an order cancelling all this form of speech. . . . The discipline had gone, and we officers knew it, and we did not know what the next hour would bring forth.

V

There is much to write of Russia at war. Not much of battles, certainly, but much of life upon the various fronts, of how the Revolution affected us in the active army. . . . I have no great advance to chronicle, save Russia's own private victory; but also I have no retreat to write about on the Russian Front proper. . . . Certainly we retreated in Roumania. . . . To-day our line is very much the same as it was twenty months ago. Indeed, nearly two years ago, I was where I am now upon the middle front. The army here has hardly moved at all.

There is much to write about the Caucasus and the Dobruja, on both of which fronts the R.N.A.S. armoured cars, the first British expeditionary force to fight with Russia, did service. So I will tell you what I have seen and much of what I have heard: some idylls of the war:—some comedies—some tragedy. I will try to show you the Russian soldier as I have seen him—a fine fellow who has fought against the very cruellest odds and who at last is coming into his own. He is a big, simple fellow—alas! too easily influenced by the minority of agitators. Alas! too, a little drunk with the amazing freedom that has come to him. . . . I will tell you of the difficulties that we have to fight with here, of the

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discomforts, of the few joys that rainbow our tears.

But the Censor is listening. She (I am sure the Censor is a woman !) loves not me and my kind. Perhaps we love not her, in spite of Bible teachings. . . . So forgive me if I do not tell you all. . . .

CHAPTER II

THE ANCHORED SHIP

BIG ships, the Russian proverb says, are made for big voyages.

The Russian ship, ballasted with wounded, sailed a stormy passage from west of Warsaw into Russia, and then she came to anchor. Autumn of 1915 found me near Listopad upon the middle Russian Front. I spent the winter slightly to the north—near Smorgon, east of Vilna. Part of the spring I spent there too, and then I went to Listopad again. That was just a year ago, but the position at Smorgon and at Listopad has never changed.

My diary of the early spring of 1916 is curiously dull and void of interest. I quote at random, but in full, some days' recordings.

"March 1, Wednesday. Six German aeroplanes dropped bombs. No damage. Enemy aeroplanes at Molodetchno. Twenty men killed: sixty-seven wounded."

"March 2, Thursday. 'Bleeni.' Hurd's village on fire."

I will enlarge upon these notes. *Bleeni* are pancakes that the Russians eat seven weeks before Easter. Here, on the Russian Front, we observe such ceremonies. *Bleeni* days are very special feasts. Our camp table is stocked with caviare, and slices of raw fish and smoked salmon and *eekra*—an extra large pink watery caviare: tins of sardines and anchovies and sprats and lobster. The cook fetches a steaming plate of piled-up pancakes. We each have two, and pour melted butter on them—or else thick sour cream—or both. Then we make caviare or fish sandwiches with them. The cook goes

off to fetch another batch. . . . I managed to dispose of seven *bleeni*; but three times seven is not unusual. Some specialists eat thirty at one sitting. . . . Then we have consommé, and tea, and the feast is at an end.

"Hurd's village" was the little *derevnia* where my friend, Surgeon-Colonel Eugene Hurd, an American, was stationed. A week before, during two of my frequent visits to him, the village was bombarded for some hours. I see Hurd now as I saw him then when we were standing by his cottage door watching the shells exploding in the fields. A great tall boy of a man with a lazy truly Western drawl.

"Wilson should know of this," said he. "I'd write and tell him if I'd his address."

On March 2, the village was burnt down. Hurd and his men moved across the snow to another village. Later on my friend assured me solemnly that now he was able to understand exactly how Napoleon felt when he got "fired out of Moscow."

"March 5, Sunday. Sivitsa (a village on the plain). Colonel B—— of the Artillery asked me to dinner. Bleeni. Sledge upset in shell-hole on way home."

Bleeni here are mentioned chronologically, not from a gastronomic point of view. Seven weeks from March 5 would be Easter Sunday. . . . The next day I chronicle internal indisposition. I remember now that I drank much water to quench the thirst the *bleeni* and the fish aroused, a mistake I knew too late.

"March 7, Tuesday. Sivitsa. Colonel B—— called. Whitewash comedy."

The Colonel had a little low-built long black dog, whose sire or mother must have had German blood. I had a cat. The dog gave chase. The cat clambered up behind the stove. The dog went after her. My soldier had a pail of whitewash ready for spring-cleaning the blackened stove walls. The cat, in jumping down, fell into this, but got out in time to make room for the dog. The Colonel clutched his dog to save my cat: I clutched the cat to save the dog. . . . Then I had to change my tunic, and the Colonel went off home to change his. The soldiers in the village laughed when they saw the dog.

This is a trivial incident, but it is a significant one.

Here, on the middle Russian Front, on March 7, 1916, I found nothing more interesting to note than an episode such as I have mentioned. It shows how dull and stagnant things really were.

"March 8, Wednesday. Rode to Zalacie for supper. Forgot password—'Mina'—but said 'Good Health' instead."

There is humour in this. It was a never-failing dodge when officers forgot the *parole*.

"Stop!" the sentry would call.

"Good health, brother!" the officer would say, and the training of the man would fetch him to the salute.

"I wish you health, your high nobility!" he would shout.

"Enough," the officer would say carelessly, returning the salute as he spoke. ("Enough" is what the Russian officers say for "Stand easy.")

Then he would ride on and the sentry would stand once more at ease beside his post.

"March 18, Monday. Zalacie. Dull. Quiet. Woman spy in nurse's dress arrested."

"March 17, Friday. Smorgon. Orders to commence the Spring Campaign to-morrow. In the evening the Germans shouted that they knew of these. 'We will retreat,' they said, 'but we will stop before we reach Warsaw.' Roads very bad."

Saturday was quiet and disappointing.

Here follows all the news I had to note for four days.

"March 21, Tuesday. Snow."

"March 22, Wednesday. Thaw. Rain."

"March 23, Thursday. Snow."

"March 24, Friday. Thaw."

Saturday, March 25, was more interesting. I had to go to the Corps Staff, whose quarters were at Benitza, some distance off. The Staff house, strange enough, was an old mansion in which Napoleon and his officers had stayed during their march to Moscow and also during their retreat. The dining-room, where I lunched with the Generals, had not been changed in any way. I was shown there a Polish book of Napoleon's Russian Campaign, with a map showing the route he took. This map, as far as Benitza, would do for one section of the German Army's movements in the present war. The

Germans had advanced along the very route that Napoleon did.

"March 28, Tuesday. Sunny day. Many German and Russian aeroplanes. Fifty bombs dropped on Molo-detchno. Colonel Bielaiev and new heavy guns arrived."

Colonel Bielaiev, a St. George's Cavalier, was half-brother of General Bielaiev who, later, was for a few weeks Russian Minister of War. The Colonel was a charming, kindly little man. His mother had been an Elliot from the Scottish Borders, and he claimed me as "zimlak"—fellow countryman. . . . The Colonel's battery was placed not far from my camp so I saw much of him and he told me of the various experiences he had had. On one occasion his horse was killed while he was riding on it. A piece of shell struck the animal in the shoulder.

"My boot," said the Colonel, "was filled with the gore of my steed."

I am afraid I did not control my facial expression, for Colonel Bielaiev immediately asked, "Have I made a mistake? . . . Is that good English?"

"Oh, very!" I answered. Then, later, I asked him if his mother had taught him her native tongue.

"No," said he. "In truth, I learnt from books."

"Yes?" said I.

"Yes," he replied. "Almost entirely from the Waverley Novels of Sir Walter Scott."

So, of course, that explained all. Far be it from me, with Scott blood in my veins, to do aught but commend the English of the great Sir Walter. But the Colonel's words seemed very strange. Another man might speak of "gore"; another of his horse as "steed"; but I do not think there is another English-speaking man in all the world to-day who would use the combination seriously in a single sentence of ten words.

II

English-speaking officers and men upon the Russian Front were rare. Officers of good family almost invariably could speak French. So could almost every Pole I met, and almost every lady doctor. German,

also—and certainly the soldiers from the Baltic Provinces spoke German as well as they spoke Russian ; many, indeed, spoke better. . . . I only met two soldiers who spoke French. One was a Polish volunteer, the other a mechanical engineer attached to an Armoured Car section. Both were of good position and can hardly come into the category of private soldiers.

I met at least half a dozen simple soldiers who spoke English—and they all spoke with an American accent. They had worked in the United States or Canada for some years as miners or lumbermen before returning to their native land. . . . Of the officers I met who spoke English, one had been a ranchowner in Texas ; one was a bank clerk from London ; two were engineers—one from Birmingham and one from Newcastle-on-Tyne ; one was a mining engineer from the Caucasus—he had never been in England, but he had worked much with Englishmen ; one had studied agriculture and fruit-farming in California ; two had been at school in England ; three had learned English in Pekin, while studying the Chinese language there ; and several others had been military attachés in various parts of the world and had picked up English from British officers.

Nearly every Russian I knew could say the words, “Kees me queek !” And there were other English phrases and words that were very generally known. They were all said to me when my nationality was announced. “Five o’clock tea” ; “Ploom pudding” ; “Do you shpik Engleesh ?” ; “Alla right” ; and “Shockeeng.” On one occasion when I was in the trenches, the colonel of the regiment said, “Good morning ! Have you used Pears’ Soap ?”—but that was the limit of his knowledge of English. My friend, Sir Thomas Dewar, may be interested to know that on this occasion I was able to answer “Yes”—and the cake I used had cost me nearly four shillings. . . . And—association of ideas!—most Russians knew of whisky and soda, but while some referred to it as “wheesky soda,” others said “soda wheesky”—and nearly all were under the impression that it was a sort of vodka. “English vodka,” they called it—at which I protested and had to explain as nearly as I could exactly what whisky was like. And the explanation was usually

this—that it was like cognac, only bitter; a somewhat unsatisfactory one, I am afraid.

Nearly everyone I met knew of “Engleesh Mees” as a term for a young lady: that all Englishmen were “sportsmen”; that “Good-bye” was something one said to friends—although invariably the words were said to me instead of “Good morning” or “Good evening,” when we met. Then “rostbif” and “bull-dog” and “pipe” and “football” were also words well known.

When I was in Tiflis, I met a Russian officer who told me—in Russian, of course—that he knew an English sentence. I expected to hear “Kees me queek,” but the sentence he proudly recited was this:

“Mein hertz ees een ‘Olland a-‘untin’ ze deer.”

This reminds me of an occasion when I was with an English friend and his wife in a society in Petrograd where we all spoke French. Several French people were there, and one of them, a lady, in speaking of sport used the word “daim” which my English friend did not understand.

“Qu'est ce que c'est—daim ? ” said he.

“Cerf,” his clever wife answered. Then “Deer” she explained in English.

“Oh !—deer ! ” said my friend, grumbling. “Why the devil can't they say ‘deer’ ? . . . Daim ! . . . What sort of word is that to use ? ”

It is inevitable that one should make *faux pas* in speaking foreign languages. Some of the dreadful things I have said in Russian I cannot possibly write down. But some of the milder mistakes I can. I called the matron of a lazaret “Staria Sestra” (“Old Sister”), instead of “Starschia Sestra” (“Chief Sister”) on one occasion. And, in speaking French, I told a clever woman doctor that she was a “sage femme ! ” . . . But the best *faux pas* I made, and it has its humour, was when I greeted an elderly, long-haired Russian priest as “Babushka” (“Grandmamma”) instead of “Batushka,” the pet name for “Father.” I also asked him where his “Lavka” (“shop”) was, instead of “Lavra” (“convent”). But the majority of my errors are too dreadful to appear in print, and I certainly ought to have known better than to ask, in mixed society,

the meaning of certain words I repeatedly heard the soldiers use. . . .

III

The earliest days of April were beautiful. A small bombardment did not mar them. German shells aimed at an observation balloon—*kolbasa* (“sausage”)—behind our point fell on all sides of us but did no harm. All snow had gone, save for a drift or two in shady hollows in the woods. The Vilia river was in flood and much of the land was under water. Evenings were glorious. I used to go and sit by the wood’s edge and watch the setting sun. In front of me were spans of melted snow. Pools of darkest copper hue; little violet lakes; the sky of gold, and then of copper and violet, too. The colours changed as the sun sank down, so that the lights reflected in the water shaded off as those of rainbows do. A blueness would settle down upon the land, and then a dark, dark green. The moon would come to change the lights once more. . . . They were very peaceful, these April woods. Walking in them, one might have been a thousand miles from war. One’s thoughts would be of all but battle—until, perhaps, one came upon a clip of cartridges fallen from the pouch of a passing soldier, or else, perhaps, upon a broken patch of wood where some odd shell had struck.

On April 6, we moved by train to Polotchani, on the line to Listopad. A Zeppelin passed over us at night en route to Minsk, where over thirty bombs were thrown. . . . On the north side of the railway at Polotchani, less than half a verst towards the west from the little station building, was a deep valley, both sides of which, running at right angles to the line, were now occupied by enormous quantities of stores. At the top of the east bank, too, on a level with the railway were other stacks of supplies. Hay in bales—piled up to a great height; corn and *kasha*—food for horse and man; sacks of flour beneath giant tarpaulin covering sheets; barbed wire in small fat rolls and coils of ordinary fence wire with which to make low obstacles against cavalry; heaps of black bread lying on the ground. Some men had actually formed the walls of their sleeping huts

with loaves of bread ! timber in planks and also trench supports ; six-feet straw mats for the beds of the soldiers. Each man on march carries his own mattress ; horse-shoes and bars and sheets of iron for regimental smiths ; bundles of clothes—coats and trousers and army shirts ; ugly mottled red and yellow carcases of beef and mutton ; potatoes and barrels of sour cabbage—all in wholesale quantities. The men in charge had made themselves cosy sleeping quarters. Some had burrowed into the pile of straw mats, so that their retreat was cave-like. Others had built a house with bales of hay, and others still had placed planks between the bags of corn so that they formed five sides, and there they slept when night came, the outside end having a piece of tent canvas fastened as a door. And some men, as I have said, had a blindage of black bread !

On the opposite side of the railway line was a siding to which shells came. They came each day in quantities. The artillery men opened the boxes with their axes and put the shells in the trays of their carriages with a seeming carelessness. They handled the shells as one might handle stones, dropping them at times, shoving them aside with a kick of the foot, and so on. Farther up the valley where the army stores were kept were two long rows of ammunition wagons—fifty, at least, in all—which stood idle for many, many weeks. Although when I was nearer Listopad, some weeks after I was in Polotchani, I saw a great number of peasants' carts which came to the Bloc Post Station for shells. These went off in their wooden boxes to be opened elsewhere.

Each day the various regimental carts came for supplies. Some were drawn by two horses ; others had two oxen to propel them. One cannot say "draw," because these oxen are harnessless. At the front of the centre pole there are two square wooden frames. Each ox has one of these fastened round his thick strong neck, and he propels the cart by pushing against this little wooden frame. The men sit on their carts and direct their cattle with a whip—a stroke on the left side makes the oxen go towards the right : and on the right, towards the left. It is all very simple. No harness is required. The animals are slow but sure. And one knows that one need never starve should a crisis arrive. Motor-cars

came, too—lumbering clumsy transport wagons with chain-girt wheels. Wonderful cars they were: only wonderful cars could stand the journeys on these new-made tracks across the fields.

From Polotchani we went to a point near Listopad. My diary now reads more monotonous, with changes only now and then. A grey sky and I have nothing to record. A clear sky and I write of bombs—"x aeroplanes, y bombs, z casualties"—and this each day, unless dull weather made our days themselves more dull.

On Easter Sunday, April 28, I rode to Voloshin, thirty versts or so away, and for some days I lived there as the guest of General Potapov, one of the youngest Generals in the Russian Army. In the South African War, General Potapov, then a junior officer, had been a Russian attaché with the Boers. At least on one occasion he fell into British hands. I may mention here that his Excellency Alexander Ivanovitch Goutchkov, the first War and Naval Minister of the Russian Republic, also served in the Boer War. When I was his guest in Poland, in 1915, he told me how he had once fought against the British. He was wounded and taken prisoner. To-day, Mr. Goutchkov is slightly lame as a result of that South African wound. And to-day, in Russia, there is no greater friend of Britain than he.

Twelve o'clock strikes on Easter eve, and the great Russian festival begins. The little bomb-proof churches, built like dug-outs on the Russian Front, hold services to which the soldiers go. For some days before Easter these services take place. But with the coming of Easter Day we leave the church to gather in our dining-room.

"Khristos Voskresi! . . . Christ is Risen!" is the greeting that each officer gives the other.

"Voistinu Voskresi! . . . Truly He is Risen!" is the response.

And the officers kiss each other three times upon the mouth.

We eat most welcome luxuries. Boiled ham and every sort of sausage. Coloured eggs with various designs. Fish of all kinds—raw and smoked and cooked. Roasts of mutton and of beef. Special loaves of bread ornamented with sugar icing and with the letters "X.B."

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—English “Kh. V.”—on top. A special dish made of milk and sugar, and resembling a sort of sweet cream cheese. Tins of stuffed peppers and various preserves. Chocolates and bon-bons, of which Russians are specialists. And tea and biscuits and preserved fruit and jars of jam, which last we sup from saucers, as children love to do.

The officers on Easter Sunday greet their men.

“Christ is Risen ! ”

A moment’s pause.

“Truly He is Risen ! ” comes the answering shout.

The Army priest, bearded and long of hair, visits each company or otriad. He wears his medals and a golden cross hung round his neck.

“Christ is Risen ! ”

“Truly He is Risen ! ”

And the priest kisses each person three times, and holds his cross for each true orthodox man or woman to kiss.

It is a time of rejoicing. “I congratulate you on the festival,” is another greeting that is given. And then one does not kiss. The Russian soldiers get special rations on Easter Day. Ham and sausage and eggs and white bread form a very welcome change.

On April 24 we brought down two aeroplanes. That day, also, I drove to visit Colonel Sergei Crichton, a member of an old Scottish aristocratic family, whose name is to be found in “Debrett.” Colonel Crichton is an officer of the Russian Guards. His brothers hold high rank in Russia. He had never been in Scotland, but I, as a child, had played amongst the ruins of Crichton Castle in Midlothian. . . . My diary on this day records “English cigarettes”—showing the importance of smoking at the Front !

Four days later another aeroplane fell to our guns. But with the exception of the aeroplanes and bombs each day, and of our artillery fire against the German machines, the position was very quiet. Nothing happened. The Russian ship was riding at anchor, and we, who waited somewhat fretfully, sailed as passengers.

CHAPTER III

EARLY SUMMER ON THE MIDDLE FRONT

IN May I was with the 8rd Caucasian Sappers near Krevo. We lived in a very snug dug-out beside the forest's edge. The country here was bleak and deserted. Shell holes spotted the fields. Passages had been cleft through the woods by enemy artillery. There was no village for many versts, only odd cottages and farm buildings here and there. These were chiefly in ruins and those that were whole were quite unoccupied.

The sappers did not work by day. Each night they dug new communication trenches under safety of the covering darkness. And each night they tunnelled towards the German lines to make new mine galleries. This was nervous, difficult work. One night when I was there the men, while resting for a brief spell, heard voices through the wall of earth, and then the sound of picks and spades. The Germans were tunnelling parallel to them. Sometimes the Russians and the Germans would meet in these mine galleries and a sharp encounter would take place in the dark. When our sappers heard the enemy at work they ceased all work themselves, waiting in total silence for the possible appearance of the German men.

On May 18 I rode to the trenches at half-past four in the morning. Snow was falling and it was bitterly cold, like winter. The pools of water were frozen. It was a very lonely ride. My friend, a commander of sappers, formerly a mining engineer, and I met nobody on the way save a sentry or two who stamped heavily up and down beside their posts to try to arouse warmth. The few dug-outs we passed were smokeless : the men were

all asleep. Shell holes were everywhere. The enemy must have hurled some thousands of shells onto the plain and into the woods behind our lines. It is doubtful if they caused a dozen casualties. Perhaps a passing soldier or two might have been hurt. The chances are equal that not a man was injured.

This is possible upon the Russian Front, although improbable in France. I know of one occasion here when the enemy kept up a continuous bombardment for close on fifteen hours. Our losses, killed and injured, were twenty-nine. On still another date at least three thousand shells were fired from German guns—and we lost five men, only two of whom were killed. I can explain this very simply. Suppose there is a small cottage room crowded with men, and suppose a man outside fires a shot through the window. Certainly a number of the men inside would be injured with the pellets. But suppose these occupants of that packed cottage room are in a great roomy public hall and another gun is fired from the outside. Perhaps all will escape injury; at the most perhaps only one or two unlucky ones will be struck. This, I think, is a sufficiently clear illustration. The French Front is indeed a little room compared with the great floor space that we have here. The back of our front is very large. Our battle area is long and wide: that of the Western Front is concentrated.

Moreover, there is this difference. The average distance between the enemy's lines and ours is much greater than that between the Allies' trenches and those of the Germans in France. Should the enemy shell our front trench, the men can leave at once for the safety of deep bomb-proof shelters in the rear. When the artillery fire ceases, they can get back to their former position in time to check a possible infantry advance. One cannot do that in France, where the crossing can be accomplished even under machine-gun fire, in a matter of a minute or two. I am no military expert. The German system is not for me to criticise. I only state the facts—that they hurled a prodigality of shells on trenches quite unoccupied, or else they turned their fire on our reserve lines, when all our men were safely at the very front. And they have shelled great stretches of country

even further back. We have watched the German shells exploding on the empty plain—not in ones and twos, but in hundreds—and we have sat a little distance off and laughed, as well we might afford to do. This laughter of ours lay between the possible damage and the actual damage done. One trembles when one thinks of what these high-explosive shells are capable of doing. If each one fulfilled the mission on which it was sent ; if each one landed just where it was meant to do ; if each one reaped the greatest possible results—the war, I think, would have been over long ere this.

To the trenches on horseback, in the snow in May. . . . Artillery batteries in hollows, screened from aeroplanes by portable fir trees. Nearer the lines, some howitzers ; but gunners and the guns were both at rest. Just behind our lines there was a dug-out town. The roofs were strongly fortified. Five layers of pine trunks ; five layers of sand-bags ; and earth and fir tree branches upon the top of these. To enter these sleeping quarters one had to go down a little flight of stairs. The men could sleep without a thought of danger. There were no shell holes here, although the wood between this camp and the front trench was thinned with frequent fires. Trees had been snapped in two. One saw jagged stumps on every side. . . . We reached a little knoll. The patch of pines there was quite untouched. A huge ladder leant against the thickest tree. By means of this one climbed to a crow's-nest observation point. The enemy himself had cleared the space in front so that one had an open view of his lines. Not a sound was to be heard. Both sides were silent.

Into the communication trench—a twisting, turning, zig-zag, deep-cut ditch that finally brought us to the observation point in front. It was a clear morning ; the snow had ceased to fall ; and we had an excellent view of the enemy's position. Through the telescope we saw his men calmly walking in an open space behind the trench. We saw the curling smoke of early morning cooking fires. We saw men carrying pails of water. We saw some others standing in a group smoking pipes. Our men with rifles could not see these soldiers. They were quite near, but we had only glasses to turn on

them. One sees the enemy like this much as one sees the animals across the deep cut ditches in the London Zoo.

These Russian trenches, I have written, are all alike. Untidy places fortified with earth and wood. A row of rifles here : a heap of hand-grenades there. Men standing at their posts by the loop-holes. A knapsack or two hanging on nails stuck in the trench's wooden sides : a ration pan or two upon the ground. Gas masks in green tin boxes, all ready for wear : a litter of empty cartridges. At intervals a *mitrailleuse*, and here and there some rockets. Men resting, too, in the trench itself or in the little dark caves cut in the trench's back. What a wearisome game it was in 1916 ! And what a lazy, lazy life ! These years of warfare will spoil the Russian peasant for work when peace arrives. He eats, of course, and he drinks and he sleeps—and he stands about all day doing nothing. I hope that I write kindly. A dangerous life, certainly, but a most lazy one. We were all lazy, we on that middle Russian Front, in the resting year 1916. One would almost have thought that we did not take war seriously. But it was not our fault . . .

Next day brought German aeroplanes to try and locate our guns. They circled above the country where the artillery stood. And they dropped some red paper balloons—one almost above our quarters. So we kept near our door and waited for results. They came within an hour—the German six-inch shells. And a duel of heavy guns went on all day—ours firing somewhat half-heartedly. All of the enemy shells fell short of us, or wide, and the enemy gunners worked once in vain. The futility of it all ! . . . There was not a Russian battery within half a verst of where the German shells fell. I do not know what German official reports said about this day, about this particular section of the front—the Russian Censor blacks out all the German *communiques* in the English newspapers—but I will tell the actual damage done. More holes were made in the fields, more trees were cut down, this latter saving the Russian sappers some work. They always were in need of fallen wood to make new trench supports and roofs. And a German shell works quicker than a cross-cut saw.

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The following Sunday I was at Polotchani when an aeroplane arrived. Several bombs were dropped. One landed on a spotted-fever lazaret near the station building. A large tent, unoccupied, was blown to pieces and the metal beds which were awaiting patients were cut up or twisted into curious shape. Pieces of the bomb crashed into the adjacent cottage. One sick man was killed at once, and a Sister of Charity and one or two other patients were slightly wounded. Later, another aeroplane came. I was in the open fields at the time—and got a fright. An unexploded shrapnel shell, fired from our own artillery, fell within a hundred yards of me. I heard its whistle, and thought it was a bomb. . . . Much as one dreaded bombs, one dreaded equally our own fire. Above the field where I was, for instance, quite fifty Russian shrapnels burst. On to the field fell hundreds of balls from each shell, besides the pieces of the shells themselves. I know of several instances where falling Russian shrapnel heads killed Russian men, while no one was injured by the German bombs.

At this time I was living in a Red Cross transport camp at Gorodetschno, east of Listopad. Every day, morning and evening—when the weather was favourable—we had bombs dropped on us. And no wonder! . . . We were camped amongst a little clump of trees standing on a knoll on the plain. By the edge of this was a disused factory, formerly a distillery of vodka. Less than a stone's throw from the Red Cross tents there was a railway siding. A hundred yards towards the north was an observation balloon: and in a line between it and the factory was an artillery *park* to which shells came each day. Whatever object the aviators had in view—the factory or the railway line or the artillery depot or the captive balloon (and I am ignoring the possibility that they wished to wreck the Red Cross camp)—the bombs were just as likely to land on us as not. That we escaped much hurt we owe to the goodness of the gods. My scrappy diary says “Twenty bombs,” “Five bombs,” “Sixteen bombs,” “Eight bombs,” and so on, quite monotonously. And the factory was never struck; the shell depot escaped all injury; the captive balloon had never a single puncture;

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and the railway, too, remained untouched. One cottage, where some doctors lived, was wrecked; but at the time the men were not at home.

A certain nervousness was evident. A Jew doctor was to blame. He talked so much of dreadful wounds he had seen, and of the awful damage possible from bombs, that he infused his nervousness and fears into a timid band of followers—some young Sisters of Charity, some students and a sanitair or two. When aeroplanes came at seven o'clock in the morning, the doctor advised rising at six o'clock. At the first sound of anti-aircraft guns he would descend with his followers into the darkness of a bomb-proof shelter, and there they would wait until all danger had gone by. So six o'clock rising became popular. But one morning an aeroplane came at half-past four, so the Jew was forced to rise henceforth at half-past three. This meant that early in the evening he and his fellow timid ones would yawn—and finally it meant bed at eight o'clock. And this in summer when the evenings were beautiful.

One morning the nervous Jew was up as usual soon after three o'clock. It was cloudy, but dangerous patches of blue were to be seen. He and two students decided that it were safer not to return to bed. They sat about for quite an hour and then they thought that they might venture on a little stroll. So off they went, trusting to the fleecy clouds that drifted overhead. They wandered peacefully, till suddenly they heard a cannon shot. An aeroplane was coming after all! I am assured that the poor Jew's legs refused to walk at first. But when they did they speeded up most wonderfully, and the distance back to the hole in the ground was done in almost record time. But here was the tragedy. The *blindage* was already full, and the newcomers could not get a place inside! And so they waited in the dreadful open air, with murder and sudden death approaching in the sky.

Between Polotchani and Gorodetchno at a place called Goradzillow was the St. George's No. 1 Field Hospital. This deserves very special mention. The St. George's Sanitary Organisation is the largest and most important in Russia. It controls thirty-two different hospitals, five of which are large institutions.

At Novo-Minsk, after a Zeppelin Raid.





The president was the Dowager-Empress, Marie Feodorovna, sister of Queen Alexandra. In war time a St. George's lazaret is the first to go to the front. The organisation leads in war just as it leads in peace.

The site of the lazaret was formerly a farm-steading. Then came the sappers. If you give a Russian soldier an axe and some tree trunks he will make you anything from a camp-stool to a very well-built house. In two weeks the Russian men made a wonderful hospita out of a big barn. They converted it to a two-story building, well lit and well ventilated. There was accommodation for four hundred and fifty wounded men. Stoves were made to heat the two floors in cold weather. Extra doors were made on each side. An airy operation room was built at one end ; also another room in which the men's wounds were dressed. Beds and stools and benches and tables were also made by the sapper.

In another two weeks the whole organisation was complete. There was a great kitchen made and a bakery. A laundry with the very newest washing and drying machines was built. Wooden buildings and tents were erected for stores. There were also a special dispensary, and tents and wooden buildings for the sleeping quarters of doctors, nurses and sanitars. A deep well had been sunk and a cistern erected. This was connected by pipes with the kitchen and a special boiler arrangement ensured a continuous supply of hot water, night and day. A bath-house had been built, and benches and little tables had been made beneath the fruit trees in an orchard behind the main building. These are not all. A new railway siding had been constructed from the main line, with a raised wooden platform and sheds in which the wounded could shelter if the weather should be bad when they arrived at or left the lazaret. Also there was a little church—with a fret-work altar and a dome and tapering spire of wood. An ornamental fence ran round the building. A bell had been mounted on a pole in front.

The St. George's No. 1 Hospital organisation was the most perfect of its kind that I have seen in Russia. That, perhaps, is faint praise in a country where system is seldom to be found : where disorder is most to be

seen. I will improve upon it by saying that it was one of the most satisfactory sanitary organisations I have seen in this war on any front—and I have been on several. The *personnel* was not large considering the amount of work that had to be done. Seventy-four male sanitars (most of whom were soldiers who had lost fingers in the war and were thus unfitted for active service), sixteen Sisters of Charity, five doctors, two of whom, including the second surgeon, were ladies, a lady chemist and dispenser, and an X-ray operator. Half a dozen peasant women from the district were the laundry hands. The chief Sister—"Starschia Sestra," "Matron" in English—was Olga Grigorovna Dekonsky, and a sweeter, kinder, more sympathetic and more capable lady does not exist in Russia. I cannot think of Olga Grigorovna without thinking of Florence Nightingale, who must have been just such a gentle woman. Olga Grigorovna's gentleness and the sweetness of her face and manner would have endeared her to me in any case, but there was an additional attraction in that she spoke English perfectly. After some weeks of struggling to express myself in Russian, it was a great relief to be able to speak my native tongue. And so I often rode to the St. George's Hospital. If I am ever ill or wounded—so ill or so wounded that I must go to hospital—I hope that I will be able to murmur "Georgievski Pervi Lazaret," and I hope that my wish will be granted.

One day I made a census of the wounds of a hundred men to see what percentage had been hurt by artillery fire compared with rifle bullets, etc., also as to the nature of their injuries. The result, briefly, was this:

Cause of Wound

High-explosive shell	...	...	...	...	...	...	37
Rifle and machine-gun bullets	28
Shrapnel	27
Hand grenades	3
Aeroplane bombs	3
Accidents	2
Bayonets	—

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Some men were plurally wounded, so the figures of the location of the injuries are these :

Location of Wound

Leg	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	48
Head (Four cases of " contusion"—shell concussion.)													
Three men dumb ; one deaf and dumb.)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	30
Body	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	26
Arm	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	20
Hand	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	9
Foot	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	5

The three victims of the aeroplane bomb were artillery-men, and of the two men hurt accidentally, one had his ribs broken by a kick from a horse and the other had his legs run over by a cart. One man was shot while fetching wood, another while carrying water, and a third while changing guard. These three men had been picked off by snipers. Of the other twenty-five men injured by bullets, eight had received wounds in the arm or hands, and six in the head—and each of the fourteen men thus injured was at his loophole at the time. I give these brief particulars because I am told that they are very representative of the average hundred wounded men in Russian trench warfare, and they may prove of interest.

Slightly injured men remained in the St. George's Field Hospital until well enough to return to duty. Serious cases also remained there until sufficiently strong to stand the long train journey to the inland towns, but all the men whose wounds would take some time to heal but who were otherwise not very gravely hurt, were sent off east in sanitary trains after a day or so. The hospital was a sort of clearing house of men.

Heavy gun fire took place on May 31, and on the night of June 1 and early morning of June 2 a great artillery duel went on towards the north of our position. Fires caused by shells were reflected in the sky. Our own particular division was quiet. My diary of June 1 records "Asparagus," and, almost as an afterthought, "Great artillery duel!" Guns one expects when one is at the Front : but fresh asparagus for supper in a draughty canvas tent upon a bleak plain—"a hundred

miles from anywhere!"—comes as a most undreamt-of luxury and thus earns pride of place. In this entry, too, there is a significance. Heaven knows I am no gourmand, the question of food interests me but little unless I am very hungry, yet I find that I am constantly noting what we have to eat. Why?—I do not know; unless, perhaps, because meal-times were the only break in the monotony of our days; unless, perhaps, because the stagnation on that middle Western Front was such that any little item—"asparagus" to wit—was welcomed as a notable event. I do not mention in my diary the other items of the meal—one does not need to note what one has every day. Black bread and *kasha* and cabbage soup and a sort of stew of chopped-up salted meat of most uncertain age—and tea. The samovars are always ready.

The enemy "demonstrated," as they say here, once again on the evening and night of Sunday, June 11. His aeroplanes, correcting fire, hovered hawk-like above our lines. Dusk came and still the aeroplanes remained, dropping star shells and red lights every now and then. We sat on a bank of ground and watched the flashes of the guns and the bursting of the shrapnel shells. The spectacle was wonderful, as such demonstrations always are. And the enemy guns' bark is worse than their shells' bite, as we have found since settling down to trench warfare. . . . Another "demonstration" occurred on the 20th. This time the shrapnels came very near us, and a succession of shells fell in the fields on either side of a railway point less than four hundred yards away. Both these attacks were quite one-sided. We did nothing. Not because we had no shells, as was the case the previous year, but because—I do not know. I only know that officers talked freely of the punishment that might follow any initiative—punishment from the enemy in Petrograd. And I knew that when General Brussilov bagged his 800,000 men in Galicia, we almost expected that he would be recalled. The enemy at our backs was more powerful than the foe we faced.

In 1915, on the Russian Front, the popular anecdote was that of the dilemma of the Tsarevitch. The boy

Sr. GEORGE'S HOSPITAL.



was said to have complained tearfully that his life was very unhappy. "When the Germans gain a victory, father cries," he was supposed to have said, "and when the Germans are defeated, mother cries." But in 1916 this was replaced by a conundrum: "What is the capital of Russia?" one was asked. "Petrograd," one replied. "No—Berlin," said the man who gave the question—and everyone laughed. . . .

On June 21 we shot down an aeroplane, which crashed to earth from a great height and was smashed into a mass of splinters and twisted pieces of metal. Both aviators were killed. That week also saw the movement of many troops. Several regiments left our district to go further south—to fill the gaps in General Brussilov's army. One cannot take 800,000 men—even though many were undoubtedly Czechs and voluntary prisoners—without paying a heavy price. These regiments marched across the plain in long processions. An officer or two on horseback rode ahead. Then came the regimental band. The men themselves marched at ease. Donkeys laden with water barrels and sacks of food walked at the side, jibbing every now and then when a line of barbed wire or a reserve trench was reached. The soldiers in attendance pulled and others pushed the stubborn little brutes—so all got to the railway point in time. There the band played a sad waltz—"The Broken String"—and the men clambered into goods wagons, twenty or even thirty into each, and when the train finally went off they crowded at the open doors and cheered and sang as though there were no such thing as war.

And so the dreary weeks went by. Enemy aeroplanes and enemy bombs: a few horses killed, a cottage or a tent destroyed, a few men killed or wounded—these were the weekly casualties. Enemy "demonstrations" that did us little harm. Shells in considerable quantities—when we did nothing with them, although we hoped each week that we would attack. Four French aviators with splendid records arrived—but their machines did not, and the ones the Russians had were out-of-date and slow. For many weeks the Frenchmen had to sit

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and wait, doing nothing. . . . An enemy gas attack at intervals of weeks. But nothing else happened. Hopelessly dull, hopelessly dreary, hopelessly hopeless!

I was a pessimist in those first six months of 1916. And then I was ill, so I packed my kit and went away.

CHAPTER IV

WAR TIME TRAVELLING IN RUSSIA

ONE of the greatest difficulties that Russia had to contend with was the question of distance. Railway communication was very bad. Railroads were few and many of such as were had only single lines. There was a scarcity of wagons, and certainly there was an absence of organisation. Even had the most perfect system of working been, the difficulties would still have remained very great. The Baltic was closed to merchant ships : so was the Black Sea : Russia had only two ports —Archangel and Vladivostok. The former was ice-bound for several months each year, the latter was very far away. Great quantities of ammunition and guns and stores had to be brought from these two distant ports to the front. Armies of men had to be moved great distances by rail to reach other parts of the Front, not very far away as aeroplanes fly. The wounded men were at least four or five days in the sanitary trains on their way to Moscow or Petrograd or even to the nearer town of Kiev. The communication to the Caucasian Front was even worse. Men and guns and ammunition and stores were several weeks on the way by train. Some goods wagons brought back wounded men. Some returned empty : the wagons were out of use for weeks at a time. In 1915, when I was in a military train, we were five days en route from Orsha to Minsk. The ordinary time for that journey is eight hours. The chief difficulty and the chief delays are in cross-country travelling. In October, 1916, the British armoured cars were sixteen days in the train in the journey from Kars to Odessa.

In many cases matters could have been improved. Between Polotchani and Listopad there was a single railway line. On this all stores and ammunition travelled west, and wounded travelled east. After the retreat of 1915 had come to an end, a second line was laid. But up till the month of June, 1916, this line was not used. It was useless. The rails were so unevenly laid that no train could possibly have kept on them. The line could have been made serviceable in a very few weeks, but nothing was done.

"Who is responsible?" I asked an officer of the Railway Battalion.

"Everybody—and nobody," he answered.

And there you have the explanation of much of the trouble in Russia. Everyone was responsible—and nobody was. "There, now," say Russian officers, "that is typical. Everybody and nobody. That is quite Russian." The average Russian knows the faults of his country and is always willing to discuss them freely. He seldom defends them. "Oh! that's Russia," he says—and shrugs. He will even recount incidents *ad gloriam minorem* of his native land. . . . I find myself swearing by Britain and all the things that Britain does. There is none such patriotism in Russia. . . . But I am writing now of pre-revolution days. . . .

It is not easy to travel by train in Russia in war time. The carriages are very crowded. There is an insufficiency of trains. Time-tables do not help one. Few regular services are run. Sometimes the lines are closed to all but goods traffic for a week at a time. If one speaks Russian imperfectly the difficulties are even greater—unless one is British. Then there are a thousand doors that open to the sesamic word "Anglay-chanyin."

I have been more than two years on the Russian Front, and never once have I been asked to show my passport. At first this was somewhat surprising to me. In my pre-war thoughts of Russia passports had figured largely. . . . In towns, of course the hotel managers demanded one's passport on arrival, but on two occasions when I was in town passportless I simply filled in a paper blank and nothing more was said. But a stranger in

Petrograd or Moscow is of small importance compared with a stranger at the Front. I have been with the artillery and in the trenches ; with Cossack companies and with a sapper rota (a section of 250 men) ; in aerodromes and in captive balloons ; in various divisional staff quarters and in the Army Corps staff buildings—and no one has ever questioned my right to be there. “Anglachanyin” (“Englishman”) that is quite sufficient. Your Russian is much too trusting, much too kind. It must be easy to be a spy in Russia. I have had secrets told me which I cannot write of now : I have seen plans that no one short of a high officer should see—and I have travelled freely wherever I wished to do. As a human being, I certainly have no cause for complaint ; but as a British subject and no lover of the Germans and their spies, I find that this freedom is very wrong.

Railway tickets, for instance. I go to the Commandant of a station and I recite my words : “I am a subject of Great Britain. I wish to go to a certain town. Please give me a ticket.”

“Anglachanyin ? ”

“Da . . . Yes. . . . Anglachanyin.”

And the Commandant smiles on me and shakes hands, and offers me a cigarette, and gives orders for a ticket to be written out for me at once. He asks me how long I have been in Russia ; if Russia pleases me ; if I was in Russia before the war, and many other questions. He also asks me when I think the war will finish. . . . A soldier fetches my ticket. The Commandant glances at it, then gives it to me. We shake hands, and off I go. . . . True, I am in Russian uniform—but so are most of Germany’s spies. Their epaulettes are of a higher rank than mine. . . .

Sometimes I travel ticketless. The conductor arrives. “I am an Englishman,” I say. One does not differentiate between Englishmen, Scotsmen or Irishmen in Russia. The one word “Anglachanyin” covers us all.

“Ah ! . . . Anglachanyin ? ” the conductor says, running his eyes over me to see if our general outline is the same.

“Da. . . . Anglachanyin.”

"Oh! very well, very well," and no more questions are asked.

But to do this is not enough, sometimes. One has to be tactical. On one occasion I had a paper entitling me to a second-class ticket, without "place card," provided there was room. I gave this to the booking office clerk in Petrograd and asked him for a ticket to Moscow.

"There is no room," he said.

This was not surprising. At this time civilians who wished to travel to Moscow from Petrograd had to secure their tickets some weeks in advance. . . . I offered to pay full fare, but that made no difference. The man said the train was full.

I went to the Natchalnik Stantzii—the station-master. He told me he could do nothing. I was in a hurry and I did not wish to remain longer in Petrograd, so I went to the military commandant of the station, who had a small, dingy, untidy office in a nearby street. He could do nothing for me except to advise me to get on the train without a ticket and chance my luck.

The unreserved carriages were absolutely packed with passengers, so I went into one of the carriages where there were reserved berths—"place cards" are required for these. I found a vacant number so I settled in the compartment. Later, when the train had left the station the assistant conductor came for the tickets. I told him I was "Anglaychanyin."

"Ah!" said he, and smiled most kindly.

I thought that the matter would end there, but half an hour later the chief conductor came along. He was a stout, most important-looking man, wearing a long white Russian tunic, a white cap with much braid and green velvet on it, gaudy epaulettes, a coloured sash and numerous badges and decorations.

"This man," I thought, "must be dealt with tactically," so I rose to my feet on his arrival and saluted as though he were a General. He smiled kindly and happily.

"Ya Anglaychanyin," said I.

"Ah! . . . Anglaychanyin?"

"Tak tochno. . . . Precisely so," said I in the language of the Russian soldiers to their officers, and of

the junior officers to the men of high rank. Also I saluted again.

The chief conductor smiled kindly. . . . Then he ordered the second man to fetch a pillow for me, and sheets and a rug.

"Without charge," said he.

I saluted and thanked him.

"Please!" he said, and went off.

There was a Russian officer in the compartment. He spoke to me in French.

"Why did you salute?" he asked, amazedly. "He"—contemptuously—"is no officer!"

"I know," said I. "Anyhow, he looks like one. . . . I have no place card."

"Yes—but—"

"And I have no ticket."

"Yes—but—"

"And I am anxious to get to Moscow."

"But—"

"And politeness costs nothing," I added.

He laughed. "Your politeness has saved you the cost of the hire of bed linen," he said.

There were tips to be given, of course. But in Russia one has to give tips lavishly in any case.

On other occasions I have asked for a second-class ticket—which, as an officer in the Russian Army, I am entitled to have free of charge—and these kind Russian commandants have given me a pass for a small first-class reserved coupé. Once—it was on the journey from Kiev to Odessa—the Commandant at Kiev ordered a soldier to conduct me to a first-class reserved compartment, but he forgot to send me the ticket he had promised, so I travelled without one. I said "Anglachanyin" to the conductor. That satisfied him. He locked the door of my coupé to keep out other passengers. Later on a very charming Russian naval officer—he turned out to be Prince Gagarine—asked me, as a favour, if I would allow him to travel in my coupé, as the train was so crowded!

Heaven knows, I do not complain—except to say that it would be better policy to ask to see my passports first. But perhaps I have a specially honest face? I do not know. I do know that it is not a Russian one—

and that ought, in war time, to condemn me to be treated with suspicion.

II

From the position to the nearest station from which trains run to Petrograd or Moscow, one does not require a ticket. There are no civilians in these army trains, and one's uniform is considered quite enough to justify one's place. Almost invariably these trains run at night. They are unlit save for a dim candle at either end of the long carriages. One cannot read : and sometimes the time of journey, even of a dozen miles, is very long. Sometimes no passenger-carriages run. Then one must travel as best one can.

I left a special military station near the position in a small sanitary train that ran as far as Polotchani only. I travelled in one of the white-painted goods wagons with a dozen wounded. From Polotchani to Molodetchno I travelled on the open platform at the end of a goods truck, sitting on my baggage. And at Molodetchno, while I was having tea with some officers whom I had first met in Poland in 1915, and whom I had not seen for more than a year, the only train to Polotsk—a special train with several aeroplanes—set off suddenly and I was left behind. But at night, at half-past ten, there was a locomotive going to Polotsk with a single goods wagon full of railway men, so I travelled in it. We were sixty altogether, including two other officers and a little elderly Sister of Charity who slept on the floor at our feet. At Polotsk, in the morning, I got a passenger train to Petrograd.

Special carriages, second-class, are reserved for "Voennie" (military) people—officers and doctors and nurses. These carriages are usually very crowded. To make matters worse, there are no baggage vans, so that the racks and corridors and entrances and even the floors of the compartments are all loaded with all kinds of clumsy baggage. Round wooden boxes—like giant pill boxes—are favourite forms of baggage. The wood, I think, is birch or ash—I am not sure ; but it is thin and strong and tough, and yellow varnished. The lids



REFRESHMENTS EN ROUTE.

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are fastened down with single straps, like those one sees on tailors' band-boxes. Sometimes the boxes are square or oblong instead of round. They seem to hold a lot, whatever shape they are. Portmanteaux made of tartan-checked canvas—dreadful cheap-looking German ware—are next in evidence. And every true Russian, military or not, carries his own pillow and bedding wherever he goes. Then there are our swords and our great coats, the latter taking up much room ; baskets containing teapots and kettles and glasses and food (every other officer had one of these) and the parcels of provisions that the officers take home. . . . There was a scarcity of sugar in Russia, except at the Front, where each man had a liberal allowance. Officers saved what they did not use, so finally it went to town to cheer a sugarless household. Money could not buy sugar. There was none to be had. Someone was waiting for a very high price. Someone's greed was very great.

There are no dining carriages on the trains. One snatches one's meals at station buffets whenever one has the chance. The conductor announces the time the train will stand at the station. Ten minutes, perhaps—twenty—half an hour—an hour and a half. The bigger the station, the longer the stay. The moment the train stops one rushes to the restaurant. Most of these buffet rooms are alike. If I describe one I will describe them all. A big room with tiled floor. In one corner, close up to the ceiling, there is an ikon with a thin candle burning in a little coloured dish in front. At one end of the room is a high counter on which are sandwiches and "butter-brod" (small pieces of bread with slices of ham or cheese or sausage or fish or a layer of caviare on top—half sandwiches, in fact, the upper layer of bread being absent) ; packets of chocolate and sweets ; cigarettes ; bottles of coloured mineral water ; fruit. At one end of the counter are large steaming samovars, with glasses already filled with tea on a tray in front. At the other end are pots of cabbage soup, great cooking dishes filled with "cutlets," meat rissoles, lumps of beef or mutton or pork, and potatoes. If one has only ten minutes allowed one, it is best to go to the counter and receive one's food oneself. Or, to be quite safe, it

is well to buy sandwiches or loaves of bread and portions of meat and take them away with one to eat them in the train. . . . If the train stops for a long time one can sit at one of the long tables and give one's order to a waiter. Then one can eat in comparative comfort, although every now and then a general or a staff colonel comes into the room and fetches one to one's feet to salute. Also one has to ask the senior officer's permission to smoke should one be at his table. This request almost invariably embarrasses the poor man : he has to mumble his permission with his mouth full.

One has to eat quickly, as a rule. Sometimes one has no time to finish one's meal. Two bells are rung—the signal to get on board the train. There is a grating of chairs hastily abandoned. One thrusts some money into a bewildered servant's hand and rushes off, mouth full, sometimes a piece of bread in hand. There is absolutely no system. The caterers trust to the honesty of their customers in the matter of payment. Personally, I have usually paid too much. . . . I have had to run away before I received my change.

The buffet is also the first and second-class waiting room. Baggage rests close to the walls, at the ends of the tables, and at the bases of the columns that are usually to be found supporting the ceilings. There are many travellers who do not eat ; they simply crowd the room. Tired officers sleep on their luggage or on the benches near the walls, or at the tables, their heads resting on their arms. . . . There is a newspaper stall in the restaurant also with a woman in charge. Here are various newspapers, a few days old, back number journals, paper-backed books (all Russian books are issued in paper covers, with the exception of special editions de luxe) and postcards and postage stamps.

Two bells, and one hurries to the platform. . . . Three bells, and one enters the train as it moves slowly off. One finds it difficult to pass along the corridor. More passengers and luggage have somehow found a place there. The new faces interest one for a time. And there is tea to be had. At every station there are large boilers on the platform with a constant supply of hot water. All those who have their kettles with them fill them at these boilers in order to make tea in the

train. There is always time to get hot water, even if the train stops for only five minutes. Then we drink tea out of our glasses—or out of one glass, turn about. One has to hurry to empty one's glass in order to give it to the next man.

And thus we travel back to town, and back to the Front again. It is most uncomfortable, yet one is quite happy. One's fellow-passengers are always very kind—they share their provisions with one with true Russian hospitality, and generally are very sociable. Besides, the average train is more comfortable than a hole in the ground—although in the matter of fresh-air the stuffy hole is to be preferred.

For the soldiers on these long train journeys there are hawkers who sell various eatables at every railway station. Each soldier has his own teapot and his own tea and sugar. He can also buy loaves of bread and sausages and other luxuries from the firm of army caterers, Babushka and Tyotha.

CHAPTER V

THE CAUCASUS—VIA CRIMEA

FROM Petrograd to the Caucasus, one travels directly to Tiflis, via Moscow. But I went a long way round in search of health. To Finland for a few weeks—to breathe the air in pine forests ; to lie upon a sandy shore beside the sea ; to motor over undulating roads past sunny villages and dark blue sparkling lakes rimmed by black woods ; to picnic in the shade by the wayside ; and for all these joys that were so very dear after the weary life upon the front, I owe a debt of thankfulness to Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Thornton, of Petrograd. Ten miles from Terioky lay their *datcha* (country house). I christened this place "Thornton's-by-the-sea." One stepped out from one's room to a wide lawn that stretched up to the shore. Flower beds and shady trees and ornamental shrubs. . . . Roses of every shade of red that rained their petals on the summer breeze. And there were days of fishing in the sea, when one returned at night with many fish. And there was a dark bedded river up which to row when the cool evening came. . . . And there were the lights of Kronstadt that scoured the sky all through the night in search of Zeppelins.

Thus I found health, and set out for the Caucasus. At Moscow there was a telegram for me from Colonel de Bargigli, with whom I had lived and worked upon the Polish Front. He wired from the Crimea that he was very ill. Heart trouble. Would I go and see him ? . . . Of course I would, so I went off to Yalta.

Between Moscow and Kharkov there was a railway station—a tiny place whose name I did not ascertain.

There are no signboards at these stations such as we in England have. The name is painted on the ends of the station building and also above the main door. Just south of this point, in a field bordering the line, a mass of bells of all sizes were lying in the open air. Ornamental bells with strange lettering and designs on the copper. These were the bells of Warsaw, taken away by the Russians when the Polish town was evacuated, to prevent the precious metal falling into German hands. Other Polish church bells were there, too. I wonder if they will ever be restored again. . . .

Night, and I was very tired. I climbed up to my berth to sleep. An hour later I awoke. The coupé door opened a little, then was shut with a bang. Then it opened again—and again was banged to. This went on for some minutes. Sleep was impossible: and it was after midnight. I rose to see what was happening. I went into the corridor and I saw the explanation. A well-dressed man in civilian clothes was there with a bag of nuts in his hand. He had no crackers: possibly he did not wish to risk his teeth, so he opened my door slightly, inserted a nut in the space, pushed the door hard to, and broke the nut. Then he calmly repeated the performance, chewing vigorously.

“Pardon me,” said I. “But I want to sleep.”

“What?” said he with his mouth full.

“I want to sleep,” I said.

He looked at me curiously.

“I cannot sleep while you break nuts,” said I.

“Oh!” he said, somewhat surprised. Then, “Are you an Englishman?”

“Yes.”

“Oh!” he said—this time as if my nationality alone was responsible for my inability to sleep. He smiled and walked along the corridor to the door at the end and continued to crack nuts there while I returned to my berth.

The train was very stuffy. As we went further south it became worse. The carriages were full of dust. I wearied for a bath. If one wishes to wash in the morning in these long-distance trains one must rise very early. Otherwise one has to wait one's turn standing in a queue in the corridor, towel and toilet outfit in hand,

and the chances are that the water will have given out before one gets into the lavatory. Some travellers do not think to wash at all. They carry a towel with them and a bottle of Eau-de-Cologne or other perfume. This they sprinkle on the towel and then they rub their faces with it. And that is all. It is quick; it saves time; and, certainly, it refreshes one. There are lavatories at the big stations, but they are dreadful places. The tiled floors are wet and muddy. The basins are simply filthy sinks. . . . Oh! certainly, scent is better far than soap and water there. . . .

In peace time one goes to Yalta by way of Sevastopol, either by steamer or by road along the southern Crimean coast. In war time Sevastopol is closed. I learned this at Simferopol.

"Have you a permit from the Governor?" a railway official asked me.

I had not. My army passport was not enough, said the official. And at that moment another passenger came into the buffet-room calling out: "Who is going to Yalta?"

"I am," I said.

"That is very well," said he. "We are four now"—and he explained that we would have to drive ninety versts (over sixty miles) by road. The motor cars in which one can book a seat had all gone off, so a carriage with horses had to be hired. This cost a hundred roubles, but if four people arranged to travel together, the fare was only twenty-five roubles each. . . . He pulled me along with him to a ramshackle landau to which three scraggy horses were yoked. A stout lady and a very pretty young Jewess were already there. The Tartar driver and an assistant were stacking their luggage at the back of the vehicle. We four had twenty packages with us (I had only two) and somehow all were eventually tied to the carriage and we set off.

Ninety versts of white, dusty road and beautiful mountain and valley scenery. Tobacco fields with rows of plucked leaves hanging up to dry in the sun; Indian corn plantations; orchards full of tempting fruit, and great vineyards on the hill slopes; dense woods, and in the valleys odd rows of cypress trees. . . . At

Alushta we changed horses. The pretty Jewess left us. I was disappointed. . . . Later I learned that Jews are not allowed to be in Yalta.

To Yalta at midnight. We drove zig-zag down a mountain-side. The moon shone on the water, making queer shadows there so that the sea became like a cloudy sky. The air was still warm and the dusty road still showed very white. Crowds of people were walking along the sea promenade, but the sea-front streets were unlit. That was the war. Other Crimean watering places had already been bombarded. . . . It was such a pity that the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* were still at large. . . .

A few days of sunshine when one lounged upon the promenade and watched the cosmopolitan crowd go by. Russians and Poles and Armenians and Tartars and Greeks. . . . I saw French and English folk too. . . . A few moon-lit evenings when one walked in a large garden and listened to a band. . . . A few days of fruit, apples and pears and grapes and figs, all growing at one's door; red wine, too—the Crimea's own (there was no prohibition of wine in Yalta) and home-grown cigarette tobacco. . . . And I set off again to Simferopol on my way to Tiflis. I had two young ladies as my companions on the journey over the mountains to Simferopol. We were fifteen hours on the way but the drive was very pleasant. My companions had been art students in Paris until the war began. They spoke French and English perfectly. We talked of war and art, and of the lovely land in which we were. And then the lady with the dark blue eyes referred to Russian words and names.

"They are very pretty," said she.

"Very," I said.

"What name do you like best? What lady's name?" she asked.

"Kera," said I, at once.

"Why 'Kera'?"

"The name of a heroine of whom I wrote. . . . I write little stories," I added, as one would apologise.

She questioned me about my work. Then, "It is very interesting," said she. "I am Kera too!"

"I am very glad," I said.

"Why?"

"Because I always want to think of Kera as a pretty woman. My heroine was lovely, but in my story I did not write her real name, I altered it to 'Kera.' . . . If you had been a very dreadful looking person and I had heard you referred to as 'Kera,' it would have spoiled everything for me."

She really blushed.

"Tell me," I said, "the names of Russian men. Ivan, I know, and Vladimir and Alexei and Nicolai and Constantine and Boris and Vassilei and Dmitrie. . . . Tell me some other names—nice names."

"'Vadim,'" said Madame Kera. "It is the prettiest name that I know for a man."

"Do you know anyone with that name?"

"No," said she. "I really know no one with that name. I only know that such a name exists. It is very nice—'Vad-eem.'"

I will continue this story of coincidence now. . . . At Sinelnikov, where I left the ladies next day, I had to rush to catch another train for Rostov. I boarded it in a hurry, as it went slowly off, and I almost knocked down a nice-looking young man who was standing at the carriage door. A few minutes later I found that he and I were sharing the same coupé. Again we talked of war and scenery and Russia—and what I thought of all these. Finally we found that we were "literary brothers," as he put it. He was Vadim Baiyan, a young Russian poet with a rising reputation, whose book, "Fleurs d'Orange," had only recently been published. I told him of Kera and of our chat about Russian names.

"You are going to the Caucasus," said he, "so I will tell you some Caucasian names. 'Nina' is a very frequent one: so is 'Tamara.' . . . And a typical Caucasian name for a man is 'Tigran.' "

When I left my poet companion at Rostov, I travelled in the same coupé as two naval officers and a lady—an officer's wife. She had the dark eyes and hair of the south. Her Russian name was Nina Tigranovna—Nina, the daughter of Tigran. . . . Again I thought of the coincidence of names—Kera and Vadim, and now here were Nina and Tigran. During the night another

CAUCASIAN WOMEN SIFTING CORN.



lady entered our compartment. I saw her in the morning when I awoke. She also was Caucasian. I was presented as an Englishman.

“And you,” said I, “are ‘Tamara.’ Yes ?”

“Yes,” said she. “How did you know ?”

“Magic,” I said. “It is very easy.”

“I do not understand.”

“I cannot explain,” I said. “It is easy. That is all. . . . I knew at once.”

She laughed. “You English !” said she. And I do not even now know what she thought. . . .

I may also add that I never met a Nina in the Caucasus or a Tamara, or a Mr. Tigran : and I never met another Vadim, nor heard of one : and—alas !—I never met another Kera such as I had known. . . .

The two naval officers in the train from Rostov were men who had been called to the navy for the duration of the war. They talked very much to me about the superiority of their own ships and crews to those of other nations. They told me that it was not agreeable to them to say so—but, candidly, the British Navy was disappointing.

“Yes ?” said I.

“Now, our gunners,” said they—and told me much about the excellent marksmanship of the gunners on their special ship.

“Yes ?” I said again.

They deplored the fact that they could not have a sea-fight with the German ships.

“There are always the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*,” said I, using the word “always” somewhat nastily.

They looked a little stupidly at me. Then they commenced to discuss how submarines should be dealt with. But to all my remarks about the Black Sea they answered not. Next day I found that they were not going to Tiflis and Batoum as I had thought. . . . I heard the word “Baku.” . . .

“My God !” said I in Russian, “don’t tell me your ship is in the Caspian Sea !”

It was ! . . .

Meadows of long grass ; sluggish pools of water ;

woods by the railway side—and magpies in the trees. Wayside stations where sportsmen with dogs and guns and big bags of hares joined the train, and where the soldiers left the wagons to strip the cottage gardens of their ripe tomatoes—without a thought of payment. At these little stations, too, we bought large water-melons at a penny each from dark-skinned children. The floor of the coupés and the corridors of the train were splashed with juice and littered with seed and rind. . . . And then the meadows were left behind and we passed through a grey, barren land. The plains and the nearer mountains seemed to be of plaster, so dry and grey and cracked they were. Hawks and eagles circled in the air. Camel caravans were making for the mountain range. The distant peaks were capped with snow. They looked like clouds. Upon our left the Caspian Sea, shining in the sun or dull behind a haze of heat. . . . Then the oil fields towards Baku, bleak and ugly with clumsy wooden pumping stations dotted on the hillside.

We changed at Baladzhari into a very crowded train. The first-class carriages were occupied by Persian merchants in semi-European dress. They looked like stage brigands. Some of them wore lounge suits, but had neither collars nor ties nor scarves. Dreadful looking folk—possibly very rich. . . . Flocks of sheep and goats with Joseph's coated shepherds guarding them. Water buffaloes yoked to spokeless wooden wheeled carts. Thin horses and "moth-eaten" donkeys. . . . Turkish prisoners making new roads and sidings. They worked lazily, with many stops. It was very hot. And always in the distance on our right the white peaks. . . . And so to Tiflis, next morning at eleven.

Tiflis in August with a burning sun; white dusty streets—indeed a whiteness and a dustiness covered the whole town; and grey bare hills on all sides. (The snowy peaks could still be seen towards the north.) Tiflis lies in a deep valley, a shallow, muddy river running at the bottom and houses built upon the steep sides. The railway station stands high upon the northern side. From it one looks down upon the town. . . . A long wait upon the station steps before a cab could be obtained, then a two-hours' drive in search

of a hotel. The Orient was full : so was the Palace. The fine new Hotel Majestic was a lazaret. (This hotel had not been opened to the public ; it was still incomplete, but it made an excellent hospital.) The Hôtel de Londres was an army building. . . . At last I got a room in a "War" hotel. These hotels are commandeered for the reception of officers only, although civilian guests still manage to get admittance. . . . The only advantage to officers seems to be that the proprietors must not charge too much. Any disputes over high fees are settled by the Military Commandant of the town, to whom the officers can complain. This certainly is an advantage. With a great demand for rooms and only one or two to be had, non—"War" hotels asked most excessive prices for rooms—and got them. In a "War" hotel, the proprietor is compelled to give an officer a room if he has one vacant. If the officer thinks the cost is too high, he can place the matter in the hands of the town commander, who will consider the case, and, if necessary, fix the price himself. This applies to meals also.

I got a very dirty bare room that overlooked an untidy courtyard. Opposite my window was a tenement building with a verandah on each floor. It looked like a great dolls' house. The inhabitants lived practically all the time on the open balconies—chiefly in *déshabillé*. . . . An old beggar woman shuffled into the yard as I was leaning out of my window to get what fresh air I could. She played a broken-toothed organ for half an hour. Only one tune—that came like a memory from the past. . . . "Two Lovely Black Eyes." . . . But, somehow, quite appropriate. Tiflis had many lovely black-eyed women—Russians and Georgians and Armenians. . . .

Wounded soldiers walking in the streets and resting in the public gardens. Staff Officers (the Grand Duke's headquarters were in Tiflis) in motor-cars. Army carts and companies on foot and Caucasian cavalry passing through the town. And—an officer of the Black Watch wearing his kilt and sporran and Glengarry and spats at noon in the chief thoroughfare to the wonder of the Tiflis crowd. This officer was aide to the British Military Attaché. I met him in the Orient Hotel later. I told

him he was indeed a brave man to go out in a kilt. He admitted that the crowd was curious and apt to become embarrassing. Then he said :

" I don't mind being taken for a Serbian, or a Belgian, or even an Austrian, as I have heard folk whisper, but the limit was reached this morning when I heard one voice say, ' Oh ! I know—Futurist ! ' "

And in the streets of Tiflis, in the crowded, noisy bazaar, I saw a sturdy British soldier—khaki and puttees and clean black boots. I spoke to him and we went to a café together for tea. I had received at the Tiflis post office some letters from home and some numbers of the *Sphere*. I had these with me as I had not returned to my hotel. Together we looked at the pictures. The soldier ran his fingers over the pages approvingly and stroked the glossy paper almost with affection.

" By God ! " he declared, " I don't know how you feel, sir, but this paper makes me proud to be an Englishman. None of your cheap soft thin paper about this. . . . High class, I call it. . . . British, this is. British and Best. How's that, sir ? "

And, really, there was something in what he said, but I had only realised that dimly before. . . . The quality of the paper, the quality of the text, the quality of the clean advertisements. . . .

I left Tiflis next night for Kars, where the British armoured car men were stationed. I had to wait some time in the crowded buffet room before the train was ready. And suddenly I saw the British soldier again. He was walking up and down the room, looked upon and criticised by everyone in it. He saw me and came and sat beside me.

" What will you have ? " said I.

" Thank you, sir. . . . Mine's a Bass," said he.

I ordered a glass of tea.

" Will you have another ? " I invited later.

" Thank you, sir. . . . A Guinness this time," he answered solemnly.

I ordered a glass of black coffee.

Finally I left him on the crowded platform. He had stayed to see me off. He also asked very gravely if he

could get me a *Star* or *News* or if I would prefer *Tit-Bits* or *Answers*. . . . The scene at the train's departure was pandemonium. Many old peasants with much baggage had been unable to get on the overcrowded train. One of them cried plaintively that he had been three nights in the station trying to get away to his home, but he had not been able to fight his way on board. . . .

I reached Kars next day at four o'clock in the afternoon, and drove to the British billets. . . .

CHAPTER VI

THE BRITISH ARMOURED CARS

THE British R.N.A.S. Armoured Cars, under Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson, M.P., were the first British Expeditionary Force to fight alongside of the Russians. No other company of officers and men has suffered such terrible hardships on the way to war as they did. They left Liverpool for Russia in the first week of December, 1915, and, through no fault of their own, it was nine months later before they finally got in touch with the enemy. "Nine months!" one says. . . . The comment is that another force would never have got there at all!

There was the voyage on the wintry sea. Two days out from Liverpool such a gale raged for three days that the ship only made fifty miles—seventeen miles a day. There was the defective heating apparatus that flooded the cabins and lower decks with steam which saturated the bedding, and had eventually to be cut off. There were men at sea for the first time who became so ill that they were unconscious for hours. There were cases of influenza and pneumonia and frost-bite. There were waves that splashed their water into the lower decks and snow that was taken there on the men's feet from the upper deck so that the floors were deep in slush—and there were the unaccustomed hammocks that threw their occupants and bedding into the icy mess. There were the days of darkness when there were only two hours of half daylight in each. There were twenty degrees of frost—then twenty-five—then the thermometer fell to one below zero. There were frozen pumps—and there was a scarcity of drinking water. And there

was the frozen white sea that cut off further progress for some months.

The force landed at Alexandrovsk in the first fortnight of January, and was forced to remain there until May. But they did not remain idle. Each day there were drills, and rifle and machine-gun practice. There were ships in the harbour that would not have been unloaded had the British men not been there. There were Austrian and German prisoners of war at work on the new railway to Petrograd ; two parties of R.N.A.S. men—ten in each—were detached to mount guard over the enemy men. And there was always the severe climate to be faced. The temperature ranged from twelve degrees below zero to twenty-eight above—the average was twelve degrees Fahrenheit. It was impossible to remain long in the open air, so that the men who carried out machine-gun practice had to have special wooden huts built for them and their guns. And there was frost-bite—fingers and toes, and noses and ears ; and there were forty cases of influenza in the first three months.

But in spite of all this—and this was Russia to many of the men—some of them said that they would rather remain in Russia for the rest of their lives than undergo another such sea voyage as they had had. That tells of the terrible crossing more than any words of mine can.

In May the frozen seas were thawed and the force left for Archangel. Thence to Moscow, where a great reception was given the men. By train to Vladikavkaz, in the Caucasus, thence to the Turkish Front by road—and now, as one officer said to me, the real troubles began. . . .

From Vladikavkaz to Tiflis, along the Georgian road, the distance is about 180 miles, and from Tiflis to Kars the road winds along narrow rocky shelves of land beside a river-side and over a high mountain range on to a treeless, burnt-up plain for 182 miles. The difficulties were very great, but the force left Vladikavkaz on July 28 and reached Kars on July 31 intact, without having had a single mechanical breakdown. In his official report, Commander Locker-Lampson

wrote : "Transit along a windy, precipitous and ill-kept road, which is the only avenue of supply for a great army, cannot be speedy; and becomes necessarily sluggish when the means of this supply consists of ancient carts, slow-moving camels and dromedaries, mule teams, ox wagons with circular spokeless wheels, and caravans extending often for hundreds of yards and controlled, not as a rule by soldiery, but by low-class teamsters whose language even was unknown to the average Russian. It was sometimes by a rather arbitrary interpretation of road rights that the cars got piloted along.

"The road surface proved the greatest obstacle, and at one spot rocks tore holes in the base plates of four cars. This damage, however, seccotine, soap and medical plaster managed to overcome in half an hour. In fact so successfully did the squadrons travel that Ekaterinopol was reached before the oxen destined for their mid-day meal had been killed." The force reached Kars eighteen hours before the allotted time. But here they were met by disappointment. In conjunction with the British cars a Russian attack on the Turkish positions before Erzeroum had been planned for mid-August, but a surprise attack by the Turks near Trebizond in July had forced the Russians into an earlier offensive on the Erzeroum Front by way of diversion. This met with great success. Erzingjan and Mamal-katoun were captured, the whole of the road on which the British cars had hoped to operate fell into Russian hands, and so successful was the Russian advance, that the army was in danger of out-running its means of supply. The offensive ceased and the British cars' opportunities of action on this part of the front were gone for some months.

The force proceeded to Sarakamish, forty miles from Kars, and there the Grand Duke, Nicolai Nicolaievitch, then Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Armies on the Caucasus, inspected it. At his request one squadron was sent to North Persia and two squadrons were ordered to go to the Mush-Bitlis Front, on which the Russians had recently suffered a reverse. This part of the Russian lines lay several hundred versts off the main artery of supply—the Erzeroum road. The shortage

AN OLD TURKISH VILLAGE IN ARMENIA.

On the right is Commander O. LOCKER-LAMSON, M.P.





of all supplies and transport and the absence of railways made it impossible for the Russians to feed, munition or transport the British men, but Commander Locker-Lampson undertook to carry out all these obligations himself. At Keupri Keui Bridge, 102 miles from the rail-head, an advanced base was established. From here Commander Locker-Lampson proceeded another sixty-four miles to Khinis.

Commander Gregory, R.N., in the meanwhile had travelled over two thousand miles to inspect the roads, suffering very much from exposure to the rapid-changing climate (tropic heat in the plains to arctic cold on the mountains) and from shortage of food. At Khinis Commander Locker-Lampson learnt that the road to the Front by way of Charborg had been inspected by Commander Gregory and found impassable for the cars. There was another road, but it also proved hopeless ; all the temporary wooden bridges had been torn down by Russian soldiers for firewood in the absence of other fuel ! A third road, "a long way round," existed via Lire. The Russian Staff ordered one of the British squadrons to try this. But the difficulties were hopeless. At one river that had to be crossed, the cars were immersed for two days, and finally the Staff ordered the squadron to cease its heroic efforts to get to the position along this route.

There was only one thing to be done. The impassable road via Charborg had to be passed somehow. The Russian Staff made arrangements for the hurried bridging of rivers and streams, so that finally a few of the cars from the British Third Squadron managed to reach Charborg. Base plates had been ripped from the cars, torque rods twisted, axles bent, and gears seized. Two of the cars had to be lowered down steep slopes before they could struggle through. On August 24 Squadron 3 left Charborg for Mush, a distance of thirty miles. There, at night, Commander Locker-Lampson joined them and led them slowly in total darkness across the plain to a spot two miles from the Mush-Bitlis road. After an hour's rest, Commander Locker-Lampson went on foot ahead of the cars to show them the way. It was imperative that the cars crossed the plain before daylight in order to avoid being seen by the enemy,

who held positions in the mountains. There was a further disappointment. The Russian Staff, ignorant of the road, had sent the British cars many miles out of their way, so that when daylight came it was found that over fifty miles would still have to be covered before the cars could get in touch with the advanced Turkish positions which lay twenty miles short of Bitlis.

Commander Locker-Lampson has told me of this journey :—

" We were particularly warned against the Kurds, whose villages dot the plains and hills here, and who had been recently armed and organised into battalions by the Turks. We were urged to allow no man to fall alive into their hands, as their cruelty was nameless, and a merciless vendetta existed between them and the Cossacks. Prisoners are not taken on either side, and only a week previously two Cossacks who had fallen into the hands of the Kurds escaped torture by a miracle. We decided to keep the cars together.

" After a few miles the so-called ' Chaussée road ' indicated on the Russian map failed, broke up, and indeed, disappeared. We were left to follow a hard track over the plain which was continually interrupted by streams, deep fissures in the earth and even swamps. Difficulties grew, as wood was very scarce for bridging purposes, while the soil, burned to the consistency of brick, resisted everything but a full-sized pick. I tried to hurry on ahead in my touring car but got held up by a stream which we spanned with great difficulty with logs hauled from a neighbouring village. Across this temporary rampart every car rattled successfully except a heavy transport wagon which got bogged. It was only by setting two sotnias (sotnia = a hundred) of Cossacks to pull for four hours on this car that we managed to make the village of Haskoi—midway on our journey—by noon. Another stream had to be crossed here. We raised the bottom with stones—which ripped a hole in the base plate of one of the armoured cars. By melting down some revolver bullets and pouring the fluid lead in over a casting of mud, the officer in charge managed to plug the leak and resume work. . . . The village of Haskoi was quite deserted.

Every inhabitant, being Christian, had been murdered a year previously by the Turks.

"The difficulties before us outdid any hitherto. There appeared to be no road out of the village to Marnik, our immediate destination, and the journey resolved itself into a blind pilgrimage over the plain. River beds, dry and hard, barred our path, as well as endless streams filled with rotting carcasses of oxen and horses : and the more successful we were in crossing, the more anxious we became as to our chance of getting back. We reached a stream which only extensive preparation managed to bridge, and here, after getting all the armoured cars and my touring car over, another heavy transport wagon foundered, destroyed the temporary supports, prevented a couple of Russian cars from crossing (they had caught us up by making use of our temporary bridges) and made even retreat difficult. The Russian officer and the interpreter said that the Staff could not, under the circumstances, wish us to proceed and begged us to go no further. But the rumour of a Turkish battalion, gone astray on the wrong side of the plain and asking to be cut off if only we could get up in time, decided us." . . .

Finally, Commander Locker-Lampson, finding it increasingly difficult to keep the cars together, gave orders to them to follow as best they could, and hastened on ahead in his touring car with a Cossack whose horse had been shot, determined to reach Marnik alone rather than not at all. Towards the evening, after having managed to get over a difficult river, he reached a point two miles from the village. In the distance he saw some horsemen. The Cossack, who had run ahead, returned to say that these were Turks, and that the touring car had fallen into a trap. It was impossible to retreat—but luckily the Cossack was wrong, so that Commander Locker-Lampson reached the village safely—to be met with the order to return at once with all the cars as further advance was absolutely out of the question. No motor car had ever entered this plain before, and the Russian officer in command declared that no one had ever dreamt that the British cars could get through.

And so the British squadron, which had fed on fish caught by the Cossacks, and had drunk water from the

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radiators of their cars (all the streams being polluted) rather than turn back, which had come over eight hundred versts across the worst possible roads and roadless plains, and which had eventually reached a point only three miles behind that gained by their commander—were again faced with a bitter disappointment.

Commander Locker-Lampson then set out for Charborg again. There the Staff informed him that conditions had suddenly become more favourable, and ordered a return to Marnik to be attempted. He set off at once and met the armoured cars half-way. They turned and reached Haskoi again. Here another message awaited them—ordering them to return immediately as further advance once more seemed foolhardy. This was too much for officers and men alike. Commander Locker-Lampson begged to be allowed to take full responsibility and to proceed. His request was granted—with reluctance—and on August 30, in the afternoon, the force came into action against the Turks, who were advancing in extended order across the plain towards Haskoi. The maxim-guns were very effective. Not only were those of the enemy who were to be seen brought down, but also every place of cover was carefully searched by bullets, and the enemy withdrew for another effort. Then the three-pounder gun which the force had towed with them came into action. The enemy had so far shown no signs of abandoning the attack, but the unexpected use of high explosives (employed by the British Squadron for the first time in three-pounder shells) was demoralising. The Turks were routed; the skirmish had lasted a few minutes under an hour.

On September 1 the force, reduced now to four armoured cars, two motor lorries and the Commander's touring car, left for Marnik, thence to Mozak, the extreme Russian wing. All other cars had failed to get through, and the loss of transport meant a serious reduction in food and a more serious shortage of petrol. Marnik was reached safely by three of the armoured cars and one of the lorries, but the other, with the three-pounder and trailer in tow, stuck in a stream and had to be left for a time. Commander Locker-Lampson returned later to assist in getting the stranded car and gun out of the water. One armoured car had been left to guard them.

After some hours the Commander went off again to catch up on the others. The track proved easy, but when rounding a foothill beyond which the road reached the slopes, shots suddenly were fired and then volleys. The Turks had sent a strong force to assist the Kurds in checking the British cars, and this stretch had been selected for an ambush. For fifteen minutes—over a distance of three or four miles—the car—an unarmoured Rolls-Royce touring car—had to run the gauntlet of heavy rifle fire. The car was hit several times. Commander Locker-Lampson and his orderly fired on the enemy, and the orderly's rifle was smashed in his hand by a direct hit. The armoured cars were reached safely. The enemy had opened fire on the crew of the unprotected lorry, but one of the armoured cars had gone to the rescue, and after a sharp fight of twenty minutes had driven off the Turks. One officer and two men of the British force were slightly wounded.

At the request of a Cossack officer, one of whose men had fallen into the hands of the Kurds, a British armoured car went on September 4 into the village of Shafkiss to effect a rescue, but without success. It was at this time that the British position became critical. Thirteen large transport motor lorries, carrying food, oil and petrol, had broken down on the appalling roads. The question of food was only difficult for a time. Fish were caught by the Russians in the rivers. Kurdish cattle were also obtained. But—petrol. There was none to be had on the whole of this front. The fruitless journeys of the force at the orders of the Russian Staff—to Marnik and back, and to Marnik again—had exhausted the supply that each car carried. Also so difficult were the gradients, and so frequent were the corners that had to be rounded on low gear, that it was found that transport wagons consumed sixty per cent. of the petrol they carried before they reached the armoured cars. There was not enough petrol to take a car to Haskoi, but one officer rode there and back on horseback, a distance of eighty versts in all, to urge the speedy delivery of petrol. The answer came that the next consignment could not be expected for three days.

And with this news came a Staff message telling the British force to expect an attack by the Turks the follow-

ing night. The Staff were doubtful about their ability to check the enemy. Here was a dilemma. The British cars had practically no petrol. They could not move. And the officers, rather than confess this trouble, said nothing about it! All the petrol that remained was taken from the cars and put into one of the armoured cars, which went out reconnoitring on the plain—and bluffed the Turks, who thought that all the British cars were ready for the attack. That night the force stood at arms from half an hour before daybreak to half an hour after, determined, if no petrol arrived, to abandon the unarmoured cars and to fight with the armoured ones, though stationary, for as long as possible.

Opposite the British camp across the plain lay a low mountain ridge and the village of Norshen. The Russians were very anxious to render this position untenable. General Nazabekov placed two hundred cavalry, two companies of infantry and a squadron of frontiersmen at Commander Locker-Lampson's disposal, and on September 9 a surprise attack was carried out. The armoured cars under Lieutenant Sholl reached the village, took it and destroyed it by fire. The three-pounder gun caused much havoc in the ranks of the retreating enemy. This gun was then towed some four hundred yards nearer and fire was renewed—so successfully that an enemy magazine was exploded and a reserve battalion of Turks suffered heavy losses. Many prisoners were taken in this action, which lasted an hour and a half.

During all this time the days had been burning hot—the nights cold. The weather had been very dry, but in September rain was expected. This would have made the journey back impossible, so the force was ordered to return to Kars before it was too late. They reached that town successfully and took up their abode in barracks there.

CHAPTER VII

“ANNO DOMINI . . .”

CLOUD-LIKE above the grey-blue distant hills one sees the peak of Ararat. Conical, snow-clad, and specked with dots of black that must be giant rocks, the mountain opens out and out towards the plain beneath until its white gives way to pasture land of green and then, 12,000 feet below the top, to desert land of burnt-up yellow grass. The base of Ararat that opens on the black, volcanic, ashy plain is five-and-twenty miles in width. But all that plain and all that sandy base and all that pleasing belt of fertile soil I cannot see. I only see the snowy, cloud-like, sugar-loafy peak.

There is a greyness here. The hills are grey ; the plains, the rocks, the villages that huddle close against the mountain-sides. The stony, dried-up beds of spring-time streams lie deep between steep sandy banks. The curling road that winds its way along the plain and through the passes where the hills curve down, is carpeted in dust so pale that it is almost white. Other colour there is none, unless one looks towards the blue hills further off. There are no trees, no pleasing greens. There is a shallow river ; its muddy waters sometimes seem quite blue when cloudless skies are mirrored in the wider pools ; sometimes it gleams like burnished steel : but for the greater part it has the gloom of the dry land in which it runs.

Evening brings sunsets and glorious changing lights. The sky is golden, copper, red, merging to turquoise in the east. The greyness of the day-time hills gives

way to purple, mauve, maroon. Then come the yellow moon and countless flickering stars. The winds are cool and fresh and sweet. It is the sable foxes' time to play. As from afar, one hears the jackals' howl.

"And the ark rested . . . upon the mountains of Ararat," saith the Bible. ". . . And it came to pass . . . the waters were dried up from off the earth : and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry. . . . And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him. . . . And the Lord said in His heart. . . . While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

"And God blessed Noah and his sons and said unto them. . . . Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."

II

There is something Biblical in the people here, in the hills and plains, in the villages themselves. They are all strangely familiar to me. I seem to know this little town ; it seems that I have been in that. . . . The flat roofs, with stacks of straw piled up on top ; the heaps of dry dung fire-bricks ; the twisting rock-strewn narrow streets. The people, too . . . I seem to know them all. The women with the scarves upon their heads and veils below their shining eyes ; the dark-haired little girls and ragged little boys ; the old men with thin shanks and long grey beards ; the younger men with patchwork coats of many colours and curious leather sandals. These multi-coloured garments make one think of Joseph's coat. Some of them have scarcely a six-inch square of the original material left.

The workshops. . . . The men who beat quaint pans from copper sheets ; another man who is a silversmith ; a third makes baskets, and a potter moulds his jars. Some women work with brownish camel hair and weave crude cloth beside their cottage doors ; some pour out corn into a home-made sieve to sift out all the chaff ; some break rock salt in hollowed stones ; others make

fire-bricks just as children work with mud. And I know them all. . . .

Geography and history and the Bible knowledge of a score of years ago are mixed up in my mind. Egypt and Palestine and the country of the Medes become as one. I am in Bible-land. The scene is set. The characters parade before my eyes. . . .

There is a woman walking bare-foot to the well. Upon her shoulder is an earthen jar. She holds herself erect. I see the beauty of her eyes, her hair, the soft curves of her breasts. She fills the jar. She passes and is gone . . . and I thus see Rebecca in the flesh. . . . A tiny donkey trots along the dusty road. The bearded man who sits astride seems very much too large. His long legs almost reach down to the ground. Jerusalem and Jericho are many, many miles away, yet I seem to think his journey is between these towns. . . . There is a fair-haired boy with sunny smiles upon his cherub face. At first it seems that he is out of place, and then I say, “Why . . . Samuel!” . . . A string of camels walks majestically across the desert plains. I know them, too. I know their riders’ turbans, their black beards, their packages of merchandise. They have come from the pages of the Bible stories of my youth. There is a leper, too: and there are cripples. Up on the hills, the shepherds tend their flocks of sheep.

III

There is a group of dark-skinned men at work below a hill-side town. They are making a new road. The ground they excavate must once have been a burial place. Human bones, brown with age and clay, lie all around. Some skulls are on the surface. One man kicks one aside. The force of his boot splits it in two. Another man picks up a skull and throws it at a fellow-workman. The others laugh. The men are Turkish prisoners of war. They wear a motley garb. I see some men in khaki, with British puttees on their legs and British caps on their heads. . . . Two Russian soldiers sit dozing on a heap of stones some distance off. Their rifles lie upon their knees. Their heads drop

lower. Sleep conquers them. The Turks work lazily, and then, they, too, sit down to rest. It is very hot.

I see a cloud of dust along the road. It swirls nearer—nearer still. And then a big grey car comes slowly up. The engine is almost silent; the thick tyres run noiselessly on the dust-carpeted road. There is something uncanny in the motor-car's strength. Its sides are made of thick steel. A maxim-gun protrudes from the turret. Perched on the outside of the machine, a British officer sits easily.

My Bible-land which seemed so real vanishes as dreams are wont to do. There is no past: no future save a time of hope. Anno Domini . . . 1916.

The car passes. The officer sings as he goes by. The words come to me in gusts. . . .

“ I want to go over the sea,

Where the big guns cannot reach me. . . .”

Then, very heartily, with all the strength of his young, fresh voice:

“ Oh !—my—I don't want to die. . . .

I—WANT—TO—GO—HOME ! ”

A BRITISH ARMOURED CAR IN THE CAUCASUS.





CHAPTER VIII

IN A BRITISH MESS-ROOM

WHEN I was in Kars I read a war story in an English magazine. The descriptions of the officers' billets and dug-outs were good. So were the descriptions of wrecked towns, of trenches and of battle noises and scenes. The writer, I thought, has been at the Front. He knows. But when I came to the dialogue I knew that the story was entirely imaginary and that the writer had probably got his "colour" from the daily newspapers or from war books. Because the language used by the young officers mentioned in the tale was so altogether different from what one really hears in billets and in camps and trenches that no one who had ever lived at the Front could possibly have written what he knew to be utterly false. In the story, for instance, the officers all spoke "gravely" to each other. They all had serious faces with occasional "grim smiles." They addressed each other officially—"Lieutenant So-and-so," "Captain This-or-that." . . . The language was the language used in thrilling one-act dramas. . . . "Yes, sir, I will carry the papers," "Good-bye—may God guard you," Then, "There goes a brave man, gentlemen God send that he may be in time." And so forth.

I say unhesitatingly that no young British officer ever talks like that outside of fiction and the drama. I say unhesitatingly that no young British officer ever says, as did one in the story, "Private Brown, will you please inflate the front wheel of my automobile?" What he almost certainly would say is "Brown" or even "Brown, old man"—"give that off wheel some juice," or "Pump her up, Brown"—striking the deflated tyre with his cane.

I will write faithfully some of the remarks of the British officers with whom I lived at Kars. They are typical—not only of the men I know, but of the average young British officer who hides his feelings under a cloak of jesting remarks and slang phrases. . . .

Church Service on Sunday morning. The men formed three sides of a square in the barrack yard. The officers stood in a line against some transport wagons on the fourth side. The Russian sentries looked on interestedly. Some men leant in their shirt-sleeves from the barrack windows and looked down upon the scene. . . . Some joking and jesting amongst the officers before the Commander arrived. . . . A soldier came to us and gave us each a Moody and Sankey hymn-book bound in red cloth. Some of the officers turned the pages over curiously. . . .

"What's it goin' to be this mornin' ?" said one.
"Onward, Christian Soldiers," or :

"When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea-billows roll,
Ta-rum-tum, ta-rum-tum, ta-rum-tum, ta-ray,
Ta-rum-tum, ta-rum-tum—"

"I hope to God it's 'Onward, Christian Soldiers' . . . I'm fed up with this bloody hole"—this from a junior officer who later on disappeared behind a motor wagon and rested there, smoking cigarettes, during the service. . . .

The Commander arrived. The men stood at attention. They looked very smart, very young, somehow very small. The Commander walked round inspecting them, then he took his place in front of the line of officers. The soldiers stood at ease. A few men came and stood on the officers' side of the square, forming a choir. The adjutant announced a hymn. "Onward, Christian Soldiers." A soldier sitting on a stool before a small piano (standing on two shell boxes) played a few chords ; a second soldier played a few bars on a violin, and then the men sang the hymn very harmoniously, although the words themselves were not in harmony with war or with our life in Kars. . . . The adjutant read an abbreviated service from the Church of England prayer-book. He read somewhat nervously, and in great haste—to

get it over as quickly as he could. . . . Another hymn. . . . Then the National Anthem, the men standing at attention. . . . And we went back to the officers' mess-room for lunch.

The Commander's table discussed "land battleships"; the other table was more flippant.

"What's that bird with the black head?" I heard someone ask.

"Eagle," said another with his mouth full.

"No—not eagle. . . . You know, that little bird——"

"Oh! cut out that 'Swiss Family Robinson' business," came the voice of the man who ate as he spoke.

"Neutrals," said another man. "No such happy times for us. . . . Everything they wanted was washed ashore just when they needed it. . . . Fancy rum being washed ashore to us——"

"Oh, give over! . . . You know damn-well our outfit would swim out for it."

Someone at our table was prophesying land-submarines—submarines that could come up out of the sea, run ashore and inland, wreck a town or kill a thousand men in trenches, and run back into the sea again and disappear. . . . ("Jules Verne, Armoured Cars"—this in a disrespectful whisper from Table 2.)

"Say what you like," said someone at the other table, "whisky and soda's a damned good substitute for rum."

"When I got home last time they raised the price of whisky. . . . What d'ye think of that?"

"Oh! they saw you coming, old man. . . . I was in Scotland one Sunday and I couldn't get a drink for love nor money."

They appealed to me at this point, as an authority on my native land.

"Is that right?" one man cried, turning round to speak to me. "Is that right that you cannot get whisky in Scotland on Sunday for love nor money?"

"I don't know about money," I said. "Certainly not for love."

"Future wars will be wars—not between infantry and infantry and artillery and artillery, but between travelling fortresses." . . .

"I'd like to be in London to-night," said another Table 2 man. "A drink or two at the Criterion. . . . And then dinner at the Troc. . . . And a bottle——"

"Oh! shut up! . . . Have some pity!"

"Well, damn it all, it was you who started it. . . . You've given me a thirst." . . .

Lunch over, one man offered me a Gold Flake cigarette. He had only one left in his case. I refused it, thinking it was his last (that is the etiquette of smokers. . . . Just as one always holds the lighted match to the other man first).

"I've any amount more," said he. "Brought ten thousand of 'em out with me when I came here. . . . I was home recently, you know. Fetched ten thousand back."

"Ten thousand!" said I. "How about duty? . . . I had two pounds of tobacco sent me and I had to pay thirteen roubles duty. At first they asked me for thirty-three roubles! . . . That worked out at one-and-six an ounce, plus what my friend who sent me the 'baccy paid for it at home."

"Easy," said the officer in answer to my question. "They came out in a box marked 'Spare Parts.'"

Another man came into the mess-room. "I want some headings," said he.

"'Horrible Murder in Soho'; 'Ten Tram-car Smash Victims'; 'Well-known Actress Divorced,'" answered the man who had given me a "spare part" to smoke, and who now made me suspect him of having been in Fleet Street.

"Don't be so damned funny," said the other severely. "I want some paper with headings on it."

"I'll write 'em down."

"Dry up, can't you? . . . Anybody got any official notepaper?" . . .

"Talking about official notepaper," said the jester.

"We're not," said a voice.

"I am," said the jester. "I was stopped once by a Russian sentry who wanted to see my passport. There was an officer there, too. We hadn't a single passport amongst us. . . . But I had an income-tax letter—damned cheek, mind you—telling me I hadn't paid. . . . Neither I had—have. . . . Got no income now.

How can I pay tax? . . . Well, I fished out the envelope and took out the letter and opened it and gave it to the officer to read. He read it seriously although he didn't understand a word; folded it up; gave me it; shook hands and saluted and went off. . . . Pity the Government don't advertise more. . . . What a testimonial! 'Have one of our Income Tax complaints'—No, that's wrong. We've all got 'em as it is. . . . 'Have one of our Income Tax letters. Help you out of difficulties when travellin' abroad. An English Lieutenant writes from Somewhere East of Somewhere Else'—and so on. Damn good idea."

Then we both went to our rooms to read and smoke, and then to sleep. There was nothing else to do. There was no place to go to—no place in which to walk—only the bleak, burnt-up dusty fields and the squalid little town, itself at sleep in the hot sun.

In the evening, when we were at supper, the conversation was equally varied. A tall officer returned from a visit to the Russian Staff.

"Well, you fellows," said he, "what do you think of this? . . . I've arranged for potatoes and wood and a hospital and admittance to the club. And all it cost me"—impressively—"was a cheap Russian cigarette."

Another officer arrived. He was wearing one of the little short swords that Russian aviators and naval men wear. . . . "Why are you wearing that? . . . There's no rule that you can," said the adjutant.

"There's no rule against it," said the other.

"There is now"—and off the tiny sword had to come.

"Never mind"—philosophically—"I bought it for a souvenir."

Someone was looking at the "Honours" page of the *Sphere*. "I hope I never see myself there," said one seriously.

"Now then, H——, tell about that horse you shot."

He refused, but later on was persuaded to tell me of an occasion on the journey to the Caucasian Front, when he came across a wounded horse on a narrow road along the edge of a cliff. He determined to put the animal out of its pain, so he produced his revolver—

"I shot him through the head. He looked at me with

a reproachful smile. . . . I shot him again through the forehead. He rose up to his legs and fell two hundred feet down the cliff. I let him have another five shots (I'm a good revolver shot) and I'm damned if he didn't get up and start eating the grass! . . . God's truth! . . . It took other three shots to finish him off. . . . Next time I go horse-shooting I'm going to use the three-pounder."

The British chaplain in the Caucasus (his home is in Baku) came on a visit to the force. One night we played bridge while the parson sat reading in the room.

"Damn it all—I mean"—with a hurried glance at the chaplain—"dash it all, why didn't you double?" . . .

"Now what the hell—I mean what the dev—the dickens" came later.

The chaplain, absorbed in a magazine, had this effect on the others. . . .

"You can tell him that he has as much chance of coming here as he has of having a litter of flat-fish."

. . . . "At the beginning of the war I thought of getting married. I was at the marriageable age. . . . I'm not now. . . . Of course I may still get married for spite. . . . How do you get divorced. . . . I don't know."

"H'sh—sh. . . ."

"Divorce!"—loudly—"it's a good enough word" . . .

There had been a sort of farewell party in the town club. . . . The conversation next day included the following:

"Did he dance well, or like a couple of asses with rheumatism?"

". . . . Face of chalk. . . . By God! but she did look bad!"

"And X—kept running about like a dog out of work."

"You lie, sir! You lie—like a stinking fish!"

Such conversations were typical. Seldom did one speak of war. Not only at Kars, but, later on, in the Dobruja with the advancing enemy very near, the mess-room talk was flippant and slangy—and British. Hearing

these British officers and men speak, a foreigner might be excused if he thought that they looked upon the war as a game. A wearisome game that was not worth discussing. . . . But I can truly say this—that the officers whose conversation was the most flippant (and I know them well) have been mentioned in despatches and have been decorated for their services in the field.

So I make no apologies for upsetting the ideas of mess-room conversation that some magazine writers have.

CHAPTER IX

KARS TO ODESSA

THEY tell you in Russia that you must see the Caucasus. . . . They tell of snow-capped mountains that out-Alp Switzerland. They tell of tropic gardens on the plains ; of dense woods on the mountain sides where one can hunt big game ; of roads that run through deep gullies and by the edge of rocky cliffs alongside sparkling streams. They tell you that there are garden towns beside the sea where palms and tropic flowers grow : towns that out-Nice the Riviera. They tell you that there are resorts where you can choose what temperature you require—you climb a hill, thermometer in hand, and stop when the mercury has fallen low enough. They tell of lovely women—dark-eyed, dark-haired, with skins of warm gold. . . . But all these beauties are further north than Kars.

A ridge of bare grey hills. A native town upon one side—flat-roofed huts made of stone and mud, with stacks of hay on top and stacks of fire bricks made of dung at the side. A muddy river in the valley with the more modern town on its other bank—a dreary, lazy town that stretches to the railway line. There is a parched, dusty barrack square with gloomy stone buildings on three sides. Hospitals full of wounded men—convalescents in the bare grounds. Beyond the railway line another barrack house with a causewayed yard in front, and a few streets of one-storied stone houses that were army officers' quarters even before war came. In the causewayed yard the British armoured cars stood. The men lived in the building at the side. In the yard also was a large kennel in which the force's

mascot—a bear presented to the R.N.A.S. at Vladikavkaz—was kept. The officers were quartered in two of the army houses in the chief row. Beyond them, a plain that stretched away to meet another distant mountain range.

Of all the uninteresting towns—dreary, dismal, dull—that I have ever been unfortunate enough to live in, Kars is by far the worst. A historian might have found it interesting. There were two old forts that overlooked the plain. The town was once a Turkish stronghold. But who cares for ancient history when history is being made? . . . Who cares what happened to the Turks of the long, long ago, when there are thousands of their race fighting not far away in the greatest war of all the world? . . . Who cares to learn of English officers who held the fort at Kars in the dead past—when there are British soldiers very much alive marching beneath the fortress on the hill? . . . The native town was interesting for a day. The dark-eyed Armenian women and swarthy babies; the lean, mangy dogs; the water buffaloes that were attached to clumsy wagons whose wheels were simply solid rounds of wood. The bazaar, too, was interesting—for the same day. One saw the native craftsmen at their work—the potters with their clay, the coppersmiths who made their Eastern vessels by hand, the weavers who made cloth from camel wool. The dreary hills where Joseph's-coated shepherds watched their flocks by day—all interesting for a day. See them—and to-morrow there is nothing new to be seen.

I have some memories of the Caucasus. . . . Snow-topped mountains very far away; dry, barren plains that always were at hand; dust and heat—and distance—and sheep. . . . Distances were enormous. On some parts of the Caucasian Front the lightly wounded Russian soldiers walked two hundred versts to the nearest lazaret. Transport was difficult. Some of the men had the hands of their damaged arms quite black with gangrene. . . . I have seen long lines of pack horses transporting munitions and stores in the absence of wheeled vehicles—in the absence of roads. . . . And sheep! . . . I have never seen such quantities of sheep in any other country. They were in thousands. They

were special foreign sheep—not like our British ones. The Caucasus is sheep-land *par excellence*. The Russians in the trenches on some parts of the Caucasus *smelt of sheep*. (You know that peculiar muttony smell?) They had always mutton—but often no bread. We on the northern front had always had more or less bread—but not always mutton. . . . The famous Caucasian dish is *shashlik*—pieces of mutton strung on a long steel skewer and roasted on an open fire.

Somehow, after eighteen months with the Russian Army at the Front, I was able to view the British men from a foreign point of view. Their neatness and their cleanliness impressed me first. The men's uniforms were very smart and tidy. Their belts were well cleaned and were placed exactly where they ought to be. Their boots were shined and their rifles and bayonets were spotless. Alas! . . . poor Ivan Ivan'itch is not always a very tidy man. His army blouse and trousers are seldom free from tears and stains. The metal buckle of his belt is as a rule dull and tarnished; the belt itself is roughly put on. His cap has its peak broken just as often as not—and his boots are very, very seldom cleaned; practically never polished. I am writing only of the men on active service in the year 1916. The "crack" soldiers of the "crack" regiments were all gone. . . . Before the war there were some very smart show regiments in Russia. One regiment had only fair-haired, blue-eyed soldiers in its ranks, another only dark-haired and dark-eyed men. One regiment had all its men of the same type of face—and all exactly the same size. And they were smart—but they, too, are gone. . . .

Ivan Ivan'itch is not neat. To look at him one would think that he was not clean. I can upset this idea. I find that the Russian soldier is very clean indeed—not his uniform, but his under-linen and his body. Certainly the Russian soldier's idea of a daily wash is a peculiar one. He washes with a mug of water in the open air. He takes a mouthful of this, holds it in his mouth for a few seconds to take the chill off, spits it into his cupped hands and applies it to his face and neck. Then another mouthful—and yet another until the mug is empty. His hands are washed by the rubbing on the

face. His teeth are washed by the mouthfuls of water—and the whole operation is over in a couple of minutes. This is a poor substitute for the British soldier's morning scrub. I have never seen a Russian soldier washing from a basin or a pail of water. Only a mug or cup. When an officer washes, his orderly pours water into his hands from a jug. It is like washing at a running tap. . . . The taking of the water into the mouth is a great idea. Just try for yourself to see how much water you can hold in one hand, pouring it from a cup with the other. And try the Russian soldier's way! . . . A poor substitute for the morning scrub—but the Russian bath makes up for this. It is a very cleansing affair. Ivan Ivan'itch has his steam bath once a week—or, at the least, once a fortnight. Special bath-houses are in all the Russian regimental camps, and special bath trains travel from point to point. To these the soldiers make their pilgrimage. There are also special "disinfecting" detachments that travel from regiment to regiment. Steam baths can be had in huge tents, and while the soldiers wash, their uniforms are thoroughly cleaned.

The British men at Kars impressed me by their youth. They all seemed very young. Being members of a naval detachment, the men were all clean-shaven. Some of them seemed mere boys. The Russian soldiers are often just as young, but they look much older than they are. The beard is deceptive. We Britons find it difficult to realise that some big men with long beards and whiskers are aged less than thirty. The Russian soldier's boyhood finishes very early in point of years: in other ways he remains very much of a boy for most of his life. . . . The great big Russian men, for instance, will laugh like boys at any little thing the least amusing. There was a *blaséness* about the British men that struck me very forcibly, too. These smaller, more boyish-looking Britons smoked their pipes and looked bored. . . .

But the greatest difference of all was in the soldiers' kit. The Russian has his coat, rolled in a ring and carried bandolier-wise over his shoulder and breast when not in use, his bulgy knapsack, his cooking-pan that also is his eating dish, his tin mug (often this is an empty

canned-meat tin with a handle on it), his wooden spoon (carried in the leg of his boot), his rifle with the bayonet fixed always and his cartridge pouch, also a green tin box containing a gas mask. All his belongings are carried by himself. His coat is blanket or pillow—he has to choose one or other. If the coat is blanket, his knapsack lies under his head ; if the coat is rolled into a pillow, he sleeps uncovered.

The British men had their excellent clothes and over-coat, their strong-made, serviceable, well-polished boots and tidy puttees ; their rifle, with the bayonet carried at their side and their neat knapsacks and food tins and water-bottles ; their blankets and their waterproof ground sheets ; and, in a big kit-bag, a suit of leather and at least one other uniform, rubber boots and warm woollen socks and excellent leather gloves ; a winter hat—and heaven knows what in the way of underwear. Also these British men were rich ! They had their wrist-watches and writing cases and toilet outfits, and other odds and ends of personal attire and possession. Each man was rich apart from his 6s. 6d. a day compared with the Russian men. And each British soldier had his plate and his cup and his knife and fork and his spoon. The Russian has only a tin and a spoon to serve for all occasions—cooking and eating. And the Russian never grumbles—and the British men in Russia did ! . . .

The question of food . . . I know it is not a fair comparison. I know that the Russian soldiers in time of peace never fared as these British men did. I know that the average Russian peasant had meat only twice a year—Easter and Christmas. I know that his living conditions were very much below those of our British soldiers. I know all that—but here is the difference just the same. The Russian with his black bread and his *kasha* and his cabbage soup and his lump of boiled meat and his tea. The Briton with tinned salmon, and biscuits and white bread, and corned beef and “Maconochie” stew, and tinned rabbit and butter and marmalade—jam of other sorts—and porridge and soups and puddings and tea and coffee and cocoa and chocolate.

As for the officers—every article they had in the way of uniform and kit and equipment was many times

better than that of the Russians. One finds with grateful pride that British goods are truly best. Others are very far behind. . . . In the matter of rations I have found that the Russians have the better of it. A Russian officers' mess with its generous supply of food is a banquet compared with the British officers' mess-room. The cooking is much better. Our English table has much to learn from Russia. Indeed, referring again to the soldiers' food, I am not sure but what the simple fare of the Russians is much more nourishing and much more health-giving than the preserved food with which the British soldiers were rationed in Kars and elsewhere.

Perhaps it will be interesting to tell what my rations in the Russian Army are. At the moment of writing (June, 1917) I receive daily the following allowances :

Meat (this includes beef, mutton, ham and sausage)...	1 lb.
Butter	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.
Eggs	1 oz.
Rice, Kasha, etc.	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.
Flour	3 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.
Macaroni	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.
Sugar	4 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.
Bread (black or white—usually black)...	1 lb.
Cabbage, carrots, onions or other vegetables	6 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz.
Potatoes	1 lb.
Milk	$\frac{1}{2}$ lb.

and each month I receive 5 oz. of tea and 10 oz. of coffee.

I find that these rations are ample. It must be remembered that Russians drink their tea very weak, so that the allowance of an ounce and a quarter a week is ample. Jam, as we in England know it, is unknown on the Russian Front. At present (June, 1917) our woods are full of wild strawberries and whortle-berries. The soldiers gather pans of these each day. We put them in our glasses of tea—and sop them before we drink the tea. This is the nearest to jam we ever get!

After some weeks in Kars, the British R.N.A.S. Force received orders to proceed to the Roumanian Front. For two days and nights the men worked steadily at the loading of the special train in which they were to travel to Odessa. On Sunday, October 15, the Russian General in command of the town reviewed the force. Next

evening, when it was dark, a Russian military band played at the entrance to the British barrack yard while the transport wagons went to the station with loads of stores and baggage and rattled back empty to be filled again. Early on Tuesday, October 17, the British armoured car train left Kars for Tiflis, arriving there next day at noon. On Friday, the 20th, the train left Tiflis, and on the Saturday, while the train was standing at a small station, Commander Gregory presented Russian decorations to several of the men who had gained them in the actions on the Turkish Front. On November 1, the train arrived at Odessa. The men took up their residence in one of the large barracks. The following Sunday the men were given a dinner, and the officers were entertained at dinner by the Russian military and naval officers in the town, after which followed a gala performance at the opera, to which the men also were invited.

The journey from Kars to Odessa was very dull and weary. We started in the sunshine, but we were wearing warm clothes and overcoats before we reached Odessa. A goods wagon had a stove fixed in it so that it became the force's kitchen. The officers had their meals brought to them in the compartments in which they travelled. And oh ! the grumbles about the food ! . . . At Kars the rations were "pooled"; in the train each officer had his own tins of jam and condensed milk and his own packet of sugar. One officer grumbled that the strawberry jam was "damn all strawberry except the label." Another, when asked if he had any complaints to make, said that the first blanc-mange served in nine months was cold! . . . And a third complained bitterly of the candles because they "leaked." The train was entirely candle-lit and what with the wind and the rattling of the carriages, the grease dripped and splashed on to our clothes and bedding whenever night came.

And some of the officers found the rations too small.

"Could you lind Mr. —— a wee taste o' milk, sort?" said an Irish orderly.

It was a lazy time. Breakfast in bed—always a luxury!—and all the morning in which to shave and wash and dress. Bridge in the afternoon and at night.

IN DIFFICULTIES BY THE WAY.





Walks on the platforms of the various railway stations or in the towns themselves when we stopped long enough.

And Lieutenant Mitchell, a wit and a philosopher after my own heart (I wonder if his sense of humour will sustain him now that he is in Bulgarian hands ?), used to lie in bed and give his views on all things wise and otherwise. . . .

"Ten o'clock's a sensible time to have breakfast," he said one morning. "What's the use of callin' us at eight and lettin' us lie around pickin' our noses before we get up. Now, this is two hours that I don't have to fill in. In other words, two hours nearer the end of the war."

You see the advantages of sleep. . . .

CHAPTER X

THE DOBRUJA

FROM Odessa the British Armoured Car Force went north and west by train to Reni, the frontier town, thence by barge to Hirsova, a little town on the right bank of the Danube, a few hours up-stream from Braila, where the river coming from the south sweeps round at right angles towards the east and to the sea. Islands—low, marshy, willow-clad islands—split the stream in two and many smaller currents run on either side so that there is a wide delta many miles before the Black Sea is reached. Hirsova had already been in Bulgarian hands. The enemy had been driven out, but first of all he fired what few houses were still undamaged. The Russians themselves had destroyed much of the town before evacuating it on the approach of the Bulgars. Very few houses were left standing. Only one, indeed, a small cottage with a wooden verandah, had quite escaped destruction. This became the R.N.A.S. headquarters. It stood at the top of the hill beside the ruins of a one-time lovely mansion. Other houses nearby with roofs on them were found for the Force. But most of these had been damaged more or less. Windows were out—and doors had to be hastily rebuilt—and the streets in which they stood were littered with blackened bricks and broken glass and fallen stone.

The end of November saw the British cars in action once again. The country was very difficult for automobiles. Mud was the trouble—greasy mud—but after the difficulties in the Caucasus other troubles were minimised. All these squadrons went into action against the Bulgars south of Hirsova, reaping a good harvest

of the enemy. The cars did not get quite up to the Bulgarian trenches (the barbed wire had not been destroyed) but they got near enough to inflict considerable losses. Two armoured cars broke down near the enemy's position. Lieutenant Mitchell and three men—a chief petty officer and two petty officers—left their car and took shelter in a shell hole on the automobile not being able to proceed further. What actually went wrong I do not know. Immediately after this a shell hit the car turret direct, made a clean hole but otherwise did no damage. The other car, in charge of Lieutenant Wright-Ingle, stopped and the self-starter refused to work. The lieutenant himself got out and started the car again. A second time it stopped and a second time he got out. The engine again ceased to work. The officer got out to wind it up again and was shot above the knee, his leg being broken—a compound fracture. The three men of his car then carried him into the shell hole where the other officer and men were, and soon after this the Bulgarians advanced and took them prisoners. At this time heavy Russian fire caused the Bulgars to retire again. They took Lieutenant Mitchell and the six men with them, but left Lieutenant Wright-Ingle, giving him to understand that they would return for him once they had obtained a stretcher.

Dusk came—and dark. The Russian fire checked any further forward movement of the enemy. The Bulgars with the promised stretcher did not arrive. Lieutenant Wright-Ingle thought he would try to reach the Russian lines. Sitting on the ground with his left leg stretched out, he rested the broken right leg on it and commenced to pull himself backwards along the ground. The distance he had to go was less than a mile and a half, but he was nearly twelve hours on the way. Once he came across the case of a 15-pounder shell and for some minutes pondered as to whether he should take it with him as a souvenir or not! As if the shattered leg was not enough! . . . Several times, too, he heard men moving within speaking distance of him, but not knowing their nationality he kept very still until they had passed. And these men were fellow officers and soldiers of the R.N.A.S. who went with horses under the covering

darkness and rescued the two armoured cars which had been temporarily lost ! They had passed at least twice that night within a few yards of where Lieutenant Wright-Ingle lay.

On nearing the Russian lines the lieutenant called out—"Angliski officer ! . . . Angliski officer ! "

At first the Russian soldiers did not understand. They called out that no English officer was there. But when they realised that it was an English officer who was calling out to them they at once went to help him on his last few yards to safety—and freedom.

The defence of the Dobruja was at this time almost entirely in the hands of Russian regiments and the British armoured cars. How things might have turned out cannot be said, but the real trouble lay to the north, on the other side of the river, where the Roumanian army was being rapidly pressed back. The question of the abandoning of the Dobruja was only a matter of time unless the enemy on the right was checked. On Saturday, December 9, news came that Hirsova must be abandoned. I think that on this date it was practically decided to withdraw all the troops to the other side of the Danube. The armoured cars were to remain to fight a rearguard action if necessary and then to make for Tulsha, a Dobruja port lower down the river than Reni. The transport wagons and stores were to proceed by barge down-stream to Reni—or perhaps even further.

The loading of the big barges commenced. These vessels were as large as ships—several times larger than the barges one sees on "grim—old—Thames of after life." One went off that night and the loading of the other barge was proceeding when news came that the position was more favourable and that there was no immediate necessity to leave Hirsova. I had already had my baggage taken to the small cabin at the stern of the barge, but I had it removed to the wrecked town again. This cabin stunk abominably. The cause, we soon discovered, was a large cask of cabbage in course of preparation into *sauerkraut*. This we managed to have removed on deck after many persuasive words with the barge-master; also after considerable difficulty in getting it up the steep flight of stairs. . . . There

were two small tables in the cabin, some potted plants that had more stalks than leaves, a photograph of the barge-master and his wife in wedding dress, and a case of tin soldiers representing scenes in the Crimean war. . . . Otherwise the cabin was bare and gloomy and very damp.

I slept on the floor of a partly wrecked cottage that night. By the orders of the Staff a party of men with a three-pounder gun and some machine-guns had taken up a position on the top of a cliff overlooking the harbour. This cliff commanded the curve of the river, up-stream. It was thought that perhaps some Austrian monitors would come down our way. . . . There was something of comedy in that firing party waiting on the cliff to sink gunboats with maxim-guns. The men's remarks were rich in sarcasm. Nothing took place ; it was very cold ; and finally the officer in charge decided that he might sleep for a little. He sat in a motor-car and soon dozed off. A sentry had been posted to watch the stream. Later the sentry awoke the officer with the news that a ship was coming down-stream. The officer jumped out of the car at once to see the vessel. And then he saw a little tug with mast light and starboard light and port light—"all the blanky Thames regulations," he told me afterwards—coming steaming down the river !

There certainly was the possibility of an attack during the night. The opposite bank of the river might have revealed the enemy at any time. It had been arranged that if necessary three shots in succession would be the signal of alarm. I was awake at 5 a.m. I walked through the silent, deserted streets to the R.N.A.S. headquarters. A sentry was stationed on the wooden verandah. We spoke for a little. It was somewhat uncanny—all the silence ; it was agreeable to have a conversation. The soldier expressed his disapproval of the Roumanian army. . . .

"These *Central Powers* don't seem to have any guts in them," he said to me.

The while we talked two shots came from the lower town. But only two. The third came not. Unless . . . unless, perhaps, we had not heard it. Here was a dilemma. Three shots—the alarm. We had heard

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two only. Query—Had we missed the third? . . . Men's voices from the lower town; men shouting to each other. . . . Russian men—I had heard these swear words too often not to know them by this time! . . . All was probably well.

What had happened was that a British sentry guarding some stores on the quay had fired his rifle in the air to frighten off some suspicious loiterers he had seen—and at the next moment a Russian soldier in a Russian camp nearby had fired his rifle to waken up the rest of the men. It was his idea of arousing the camp from sleep!

That afternoon, Sunday, found my belongings on the barge again. Orders had been received to leave at night. But these were cancelled in the evening, so I spent another night on the floor of a cottage on the hill.

CHAPTER XI

THE RETREAT ON THE DANUBE

ON Monday, December 11, the news was more hopeful. We prepared to settle down in Hirsova for a time. I found a wrecked sewing-machine amongst the ruins of a house. The machine was beyond repair, and certainly I had no use for it in any case, but the little table on which it was fixed was serviceable. Then a wire mattress was dug out from a heap of fallen stones, and a happy home was in its genesis—until one o'clock, when orders came to be on board the barge at two. So down the hill towards the greasy, muddy quay again. A gloomy place it was, but a very busy one. There were the British motor lorries there with loads of boxes and barrels and tins. Some Russian armoured cars and transport wagons, too. The belongings of a Russian lazaret were being loaded on a Red Cross barge ; the wounded and the sick were already on board.

The barge on which the British cars and men were going to travel was moored to another barge tied up to the quay. Russian artillery was on this second barge, also heaps of scrap iron and various lumber. A gangway of planks connected the two vessels, and a gangway ran at an angle of thirty degrees from the quay to the deck of the one nearer shore. Up this the British cars had to go—on to the barge loaded with guns and metal rubbish, and with a bump on to the deck of their own chartered vessel. This deck was stacked with boxes—mostly ship's biscuits and bully beef—which the men all hoped would topple overboard. Indeed, when the cars were all on board with all the stores and luggage too, the barge seemed in danger of being top-heavy.

A greasy, gloomy place that quay at Hirsova. The heavy cars rattling down the streets and sliding through the mud ; motor bicycles with despatch riders bumping across the causeway ; British soldiers running about at work like ants, carrying stores on board the barge ; Russians loading their own vessels, with curious glances at the British men. A Russian naval officer shouting orders hoarsely. A Roumanian policeman in comic attire—old striped civilian trousers, a black ragged coat and a sort of bowler hat ; Roumanian sentries equally funny in appearance. And the muddy river that came swirling round a bend towards the quay, with the low marshy banks across the stream showing dimly through a veil of mist.

Dusk came, and darkness, and one felt the dampness of the river air. A chilly wind blew, and the unlit quay and the unlit town made coldness seem more so. A barge crowded with Russian soldiers came up-stream and disgorged its cargo of men upon the quay. Faint flickering lanterns shone dimly orange upon the vessel's decks. The Russian men were phantoms in the dark—one saw the glow of cigarettes ; a man's face with a match-light shining on it ; there was the peculiar smell of machorka and boots. . . . When one of the British cars came rumbling on the quay, the acetylene lamps would glare upon us for a while and cheer us out of the dank gloom—but when the car went off again we felt the darkness and the chill even more. We could follow the car's progress through the town—the white-yellow light climbed up and up. . . . And what a cheerless place that iron-walled cabin was ! The smell of sour cabbage still was there. The floor was wet and slippery. The walls were wetter still. And down the steep stairway came a gusty draught, because our unaccustomed feet had smashed the glass-work of the window-door.

We slept on board that night—or rather we tried to sleep. Our barge kept bumping on the one near shore, and a third arrival bumped on us from the outside. And the river splashed against us, and queer gurgling sounds came from underneath the floor. Men's voices from the quay ; tramping of heavy feet upon the deck ; rattling of chains—and always the hoarse voice of that

RUSSIAN SOLDIERS BOARDING A BARGE.





Russian naval man, the quay commander, who never seemed to have a rest.

Tuesday, the 12th, and the long-absent sun was up before we were. A lovely clear, bright morning. And we were still at Hirsova. We washed in Danube water drawn from the river in a pail. We also went a walk upon the quay. After five hopeless days I wished to make photographs while the sun shone, so I went for my Kodak. . . . The Russian naval commander was shouting orders on the quay. I asked him how long we were likely to remain. He did not know. . . . Perhaps an hour—perhaps all day. So I went into the wrecked town to photograph. It was a very dead place. In one street I met two Russian men and an English despatch rider. In another, three or four Russians, but most of the narrow streets were quite deserted. I did not even see a single dog. . . . I had been twenty minutes in the town and had reached one of the ruined streets at the top of the hill, when I heard a tug whistle tooting on the river. That, thought I, is our barge, so I raced down the hill and reached the quay breathless. Barge No. 620 was still fastened there. I went on board for a little, saw the Russian Commander again on the nearer shore barge, and asked him for further news of our departure. He did not know. Perhaps soon—perhaps late. . . . So I went on to the quay for a single minute to find the comic policeman and to photograph him. And while I was there (and the policeman was not !) the barge suddenly sailed away behind a noisy little tug. So I was left behind.

The Russian Commander laughed when he saw me. But he pointed out a second tug that was just steaming off. I shouted and whistled and waved my arms, so the man at the wheel steered in towards the shore again and I reached his vessel by jumping on to a mine-laying ship and from it to a second. Then we set off to catch up on the barge which was sailing down-stream at a great rate. A few toots on a steam whistle, and Barge No. 620 slowed down, and in a few minutes I climbed on board and joined the officers in the smelly cabin.

"I've got some good snapshots of your barge in mid-stream," said I.

"What did I tell you?" said Lieutenant —— to the others, then to me, "I knew jolly well that you had stayed behind for that purpose."

The barge-master, his wife, his three babies, his mother-in-law, and his first officer all lived at our end of the vessel. The first-mentioned six lived in a tiny deck cabin eight feet by ten. It was like a little summer-house. A wonderfully clean cabin it was, with wonderfully clean, black-eyed children (such dark eyes as I have never seen before). On one side of this tiny house were pens containing two sheep and some poultry—chickens and geese; on the other side was a sty with a couple of pigs. Also there were two dogs and a pup—the last having a habit of falling into the water at intervals, to be rescued by the barge-master and his mate, while we and the pup's parents looked anxiously on from above.

There were many craft upon the river. Mine-layers with long arms stretching out in front; river steamers anchored here and there; a Red Cross barge full of sick and wounded men; tiny gunboats racing up-stream and making great waves on either side. Then just below a low pontoon bridge that was guarded by a torpedo net, some Russian monitors lying low in the water. Below them, too, were warships of old design, and many barges, nearly all the latter going down towards the sea. A small destroyer or two went up-stream, the funnels belching out black smoke. . . . That night we anchored near the right-hand bank—a Thames river bank lined with Thames-bank willows. Also we had an oil stove in our little room; also the men sang cheerily in the hold—perhaps to scare the rats away.

All day on Wednesday, the 18th, we stayed at anchor. Our tug had gone up-stream again to fetch some other barges down. It was a gloomy, misty day. In the evening we were towed further down-stream. We anchored a little way up the river from Braila, whose blurred lights we saw across the water. Other tugs passed up and down, their red and green lights slanting out in quivering crinkly lines upon the river's breast.

Then came a sunny morning. The river was covered with floating pools of oil—dark green oil and lighter patches that shone with rainbow colours in the sun's

rays. A long line of pontoon boats was tied up to the north bank of the river. Many Roumanian soldiers were working there beneath some steep sand cliffs. We bribed some men to row us ashore. A Roumanian soldier greeted me when I landed. He spoke the English of the U.S.A. where he had been an engineer. We walked down the river bank towards Braila. A ship tied up a mile or so above the quay was taking on a cargo of Roumanian soldiers. Dark blue-coated, black woolly-hatted men, with heavy clumsy sacks of personal luggage. Not kit-bags—just ordinary sacks. A more unwarlike crowd I have never seen in army uniform. . . . We branched off to the left, past some Roumanian barracks where a crowd of men was gathered round an officer who distributed various kit; past a field where a line of wagons stood loaded with pontoon boats, and oxen were standing nearby ready to take the wagons away; then to the right along a muddy road crowded with refugees and Russian and Roumanian soldiers; and so towards the town.

I can imagine that Braila in peace time was a pretty little town, and a prosperous one. But war had cast a gloom upon it. The garden square in the centre of the town was untidy, as most December gardens are. Most of the shops were shut; most of the windows had been cleared of goods. The crowd was cosmopolitan. Roumanian refugees and Roumanian officers and men; Russian officers and soldiers; a French doctor or two with French *Sœurs de Charité*; a trooper of King Edward's Horse, who did not seem to know an English officer when he saw one—perhaps he was orderly to Colonel Norton Griffiths, M.P.? . . . Roumanian nurses and Russian Sisters, too; and the splendid women of the Scottish Women's Field Hospital—surely the hardest working and the bravest of all the women at the war. . . . Fierce-looking Roumanian soldiers marched spies through the streets, holding their long rifles so that the bayonets rested just an inch from the spies' backs.

The quay at Braila was a wonderful sight. A regiment of men was resting on the broad causeway of the harbour. A mass of steamers and barges was tied up along the river bank, and, coming in towards the centre

of the quay was a great Russian transport ship, its decks crowded with soldiers. Refugees were on the quay, too, and wounded men, and more Scottish nurses in their serviceable grey uniform. Russian sailors and Russian naval officers ; grimy stokers getting some fresh air ; horses and gun-carriages and wagons of all kinds standing where they had been landed. A Roumanian soldier here and there, and a Roumanian officer or two with their lady friends. . . . Crowded ships going off down-stream.

There was a café on the east side of the garden square. It was a crowded, noisy, smoky place. Rattle of dishes, clink of glasses, hum of many voices. Bursts of laughter from one table—a woman's high-pitched voice from another ; snatches of conversation in at least four tongues. . . . I met a lieutenant of the Russian Hussars there whom I had met in Kiev. I also met two of my Caucasian sapper friends with whom I had stayed at Krevo on the middle Russian Front. Russian and Roumanian and British officers sat at lunch together. At the next table were the French doctors and two French Sisters of Charity—and very pretty ladies these two were ! And we drank watery sour red wine and watery Roumanian brandy, bottled in shoulderless bottles labelled "Mumm" ! Once upon a time, I saw some musical comedy officers behind the scenes in a London theatre. Officers of the "Merry Widow" order. I saw them all again in that Roumanian town. I swear that these Roumanian officers I saw in Braila wore corsets. . . . I know that they wore patent boots, and I saw several whose faces had been "made up" And I know that one assured me as a fact that Sweden had declared war on Russia. . . . Altogether a depressing set. . . .

Now there was an English orderly who came on shore with us to carry back our purchases. He carried a leather portmanteau with him, and he smoked a Gold Flake cigarette. That cigarette, or one just like it, was ever hanging from his lips. Also he never smiled, although his face twisted a very little now and then. His name may not have been Bill 'Awkins, but that is

the one name that I think of that will fit him best. So in this chapter Bill 'Awkins he will be.

I heard of Bill in Hirsova. It was the day after the one on which we were first told to go. Bill's officer woke early that morning. "Hawkins!" he cried.

There was a scramble from behind a partition. "Yussir?"

"Are you dressed?"

"No, sir. But I got me 'at on."

You see what sort of chap was Bill. . . .

When we arrived in Braila, we gave Bill twenty-five roubles (we had no Roumanian money with us) and told him to buy some fresh meat and whatever other food he could find. And Bill went off along the street, carrying the Gladstone bag, smoking his Gold Flake cigarette and, judging from his careless swing, not carin' a single damn for all them bleedin' furriners. . . . I write the words that P. O. Hawkins no doubt thought.

. . . . And, be it noted, Bill 'Awkins spoke no other language but his native tongue, and that un-purely. But that did not worry him. "Wot th' British Tommy cawn't do," said Bill to me one day, "ain't worth doin'."

. . . . So we trusted to this orderly, and we looked forward to fresh meat for some days to come.

We left the café at three o'clock and walked a little in the town. At four we went back to the Square again and there was Bill, mounting guard over his Gladstone bag, smoking his Gold Flake cigarette, telling his news to those English residents of the town, and admired by a following of small Roumanian boys whom he kept telling to blank off. . . . Bill's officer told him to go and fetch a cab. And Bill went off and came back seated in a two-horsed landauette which an excited townsman had apparently hired first, but which Bill somehow had commandeered. We got inside and Bill got on the box, much to the wonder of the grey-bearded driver. Bill kept up a steady flow of conversation during our brief journey to the quay.

"Nah, then," said Bill as we set off, "you drive 'em an' I'll w'ip 'em up."

The driver answered in Roumanian.

"'ave it yer own wye," said Bill, in a grieved tone. "I fought yer was a pal."

The candid critic of the *Times* who objected, in a book review, to the sketches of Captain Bairnsfather and to the language that the Bairnsfather type used, will pardon me. . . . I do not say that Bill was typical of all the British soldier men, but he was typical of a class, and I write the words he used and I try to spell them as they were pronounced. . . .

We drove down the hilly street towards the quay. The horses went very slowly.

"Put 'em in second," said Bill, the motor expert. And then he cautioned the bewildered man about the need for haste, else we might miss "th' Bowt Ryce."

The driver, for his part, spoke quite a lot to Bill. . . . Some days later P. O. Hawkins gave me his views on the art of conversing with foreigners. I had seen Bill carrying on a conversation with a Russian soldier.

"Did he speak English?" I asked when the soldier had gone away.

"Not 'im," said Bill.

"Then how do you speak to each other?"

"That's easy, sir," said Bill. "'E comes up to me an' 'e says, 'Ooski, kooski wooski fooski.' 'Same to you,' says I, 'an' many of 'em, ole cock.' 'Bzz-z-z, mz-zz, tzz-zz,' says 'e. 'Thenks,' I says, 'another time, ole boy. I've just 'ad a couple.' 'Tooral-ski-looral-ski, pooral-ski,' 'e says. 'Ye down't sye!' says I. 'An' very nice too,' I says, 'funny fyce.'

"'Armony,' Bill explained. 'No quarrellin', no argifyin', on'y peace an' 'armony. . . . Of course I says 'Go to 'ell, y'blighter,' every nah an' agyne."

"What for? For heaven's sake, what for?"

Bill looked at me coldly. "'Ow do I know but wot th' blanker's usin' insultin' words to me?" he explained. . . .

Arrived at the quay we went to make inquiries regarding a tug to take us to our barge again. Bill was told to wait by the door of the harbour offices. We left him there, but when we returned three minutes later he was gone. And there was a tug going off up-stream at once—and there might not be another—and we could not leave Bill on shore all night.

"We cannot leave him here," his worried officer said. "We'll have to wait until he turns up."

And my mind went back to a ferreting evening in Scotland when the ferret would not leave the rabbit hole, and when we had to sit there half the night until he chose to come up to us—fearful of the damage he might do if he were left at liberty. . . .

So we waited for two hours. They were interesting. The Russian regiments were marching from the quay towards the town and then towards the west. Some offices facing the harbour building were now staff quarters. Men hurried in and out with messages. Light from the open door—then darkness—and then a burst of light again. Groups of prisoners with their escorts passed. I saw Germans and Austrians and Bulgars there. The enemy was composite in Roumania. A great electric standard lamp lit up the open space behind the harbour offices—and died down until only a red cinder showed—and flared up again in jerks.

Bill came at last—a rolling, rollicking Bill, with a strange calm at sight of his officer, who took Bill's friend, an English resident, on one side and cursed him for having given Bill strong drink. . . . Meanwhile, Bill stated his case to me.

"On'y once in a wile," said Bill, the dis-orderly. "Wot an 'ell o' a life aht 'ere. . . . D'jer blyme me, sir? . . . At 'ome I'm a gen'l'man. Wot I means ter sye is—*Wot I wants I 'as*—if yer annerstans me. . . . Theayters, nah. At 'ome I'm well in wiv th' managers. 'Two tickets, Bill, for Set'dye night? Yer welcome to 'em' 'Tickets for you, Bill? A pleasure' I'm a gen'l'man at 'ome. . . . An' w'en I wants a drink I 'as one—two mebbe—wot's th' 'arm? But aht 'ere. . . . My Gawd! Wot an 'ell o' a life. . . . That bloke there, that gen'l'man, says to me, 'Ave one?' 'Well,' says I, 'I don' min' if I do' An' I 'ad one—well, 'Fawther, I cawn't tell a lie'—I 'ad morn' one. . . . Yus, sir!"

The cold voice of the officer. "Have you the bag there, Hawkins?"

"Yus-sir."

"Come along"—so we went along the crowded quay,

in the dark, and Bill fell over a cable and smashed a bottle in his pocket—and laughed long and wildly. Finally I carried the Gladstone bag and we crossed from ship to barge and tug and other barge until we reached the outermost tug which was about to go up-stream. A most perilous crossing to our vessel, over cables and ropes and much piled-up cargo on the various decks. But finally we were there, and the British officers and I smoked our pipes and walked up and down the deck to keep warm. . . . We were well on our way and Bill had disappeared again, when suddenly the door of a warm-lit cabin opened and in the cosiness of the little room sat Bill. Only a second's view of him—but it was quite enough. He sat as the honoured and admired guest of the tug's crew. His hat was at the back of his head, his half-smoked Gold Flake was behind his ear, and in front of him was a steaming glass of tea. . . . And we were in the cold night air.

The river was very smooth—perhaps owing to the mass of oil that had been drained into it to disappoint the enemy. A swift-running river, very black and very quiet, with tug lights of green and red and yellow lying on its surface. Veiling the banks, a December mist through which we saw the blurred lights of the shore lamps. We found our barge by hailing every one we saw at anchor until we got the answer we required. Then we shouted for Bill, and Bill came leisurely from the warm cabin, shaking hands with his hosts.

"Any time y'r passin' drop in an' see us," Bill said.

The Roumanians spoke Roumanian. . . .

"Not at all," said Bill. "A pleasure. . . . Goo'bye, ole bird. . . . Goo'bye. . . ."

The art of conversing with foreigners! . . .

We climbed on board Barge No. 620, and stumbled along the deck, then down the steep steps to the cabin in the stern. There we viewed Bill 'Awkin's purchases. Some lumps of mutton and two bottles of native champagne! Meantime, Bill had gone down to his own quarters in the hold. Three other men helped him along the deck when he wished to come to us.

Bill's voice from the deck: "I pyde for th' booze an' I 'ad my pick, but that bloody rope did me". . . . and then Bill came tumbling down the stairs, hit against a

ON THE QUAY.



table, upset the dishes on it, smiled sheepishly and ventured the remark that it was a rough night at sea. He took some mutton chops and went off to the men's hold to cook them for his master and me. They came steaming hotly and smelling most temptingly after the many days of bully beef served cold.

"Now," said Bill's officer to me, referring to the other officers in the cabin, "that makes Mr. ——'s mouth water."

"And Mr. ——'s also," said I.

"Yus," said Bill, in the most friendly way, "an' all th' men dahn th' 'old's mowf water. . . . Champyne, sir?"

"No," said I.

"Wot?" said Bill. "No wine. . . . No wine on this oshpishush occyshun? No wine?"

Then Bill said, "Goo' night, sirs," and climbed up to the deck again, his mouth as usual full of Gold Flake cigarette. . . .

CHAPTER XII

* * *

FROM BOUMANIA TO THE FRONTIER

WE moved in the night to a point just below Braila and there we were at anchor once again. In the morning I rowed ashore to the bank opposite the town and walked there for a while. Long dried grass grew by the water's edge, and numerous little streams ran amongst the willow trees further back. Beside the mouth of one of these, just where it joined the main stream, was a gipsy encampment. These river wanderers were Russian. Their curious canoes were loaded with their goods. Some women and children sat around a fire where a meal was being cooked in a big black pot, while the men folk lounged against the trees and looked on. Further in, amongst the shallow streams, women and boys were cutting firewood and loading their canoes with it. Half a verst further down the river was a huge double pontoon bridge made of barges that stood high out of the water. Cavalry and men on foot and lines of army transports were crossing to the north bank. The Dobruja was rapidly being abandoned.

That day a Russian hospital barge was tied alongside our one. The lady doctor in charge (there are very many lady doctors and surgeons in the Russian Red Cross service) gave us notice that none of our men must go on board it.

"Our men will do no harm," we told her, smiling.

"I know," said she, "but ours might!"

There were thirty-two cases of cholera on board and many others of typhus. . . .

We pulled up our water from the opposite side of the barge after that, and it was very greasy, oily water, too.

We washed in it, and we drank it once it had been boiled, and with it we did our cooking. The men, none of whom except P.O. Hawkins had been on shore, were wonderfully cheerful. They sang harmoniously in the hold, while in the intervals of song the musician on the deck sat on a pile of motor tyres and played a selection which varied from tunes classical to tunes of modern vaudeville. Also a wailing voice sang a song of the long, long, pre-ragtime days—"Bryke th' news to muvver...."

"The naval influence," said an officer to me. "Soldiers sing fairly lively songs, but your average sailorman in song is very weepy. All his songs, especially if he has had a drink or two, are of the 'Break the news to mother' order."

And I could not help remarking, as I had done before, the difference between the Russian and the English soldiers' songs. The former stirring songs and choruses, or quiet, prayer-like solos and loud-sung refrains like anthems of praise, or softly sung love songs of "Little Russia"—such charming folk songs, too. . . . And our English—oh! very cheerful and all that!—"Here we are"—three times "again": "Bryke th' news to muvver"; and a song whose name I do not know but of which, unfortunately, these two lines still remain in my mind:

"The only beer he ever liked to drink
Was the beer that someone else had paid for."

Next to love, I suppose that beer is the most frequent theme of English popular song, just as next to love it is the most frequent cause of outbreak.

Shall I tell you the songs these British men sang on the barge? . . . Then you must "excuse language."

The favourite song sung by the men was one written by one of themselves to the tune of "The Church's One Foundation." The first time I heard this song was on the journey from Kars to Tiflis. We had stopped at a station. I heard the harmony of the tune, but not the words. The British Chaplain in the Caucasus was with me at the time. I remarked on the good singing. We went nearer to the singers. . . .

Here are the words that the men sang solemnly :

" We are Fred Karno's Navy,
 The British rag-time Cars,
 We cannot fight : we cannot sight :
 What bloody use are we ?
 And when we get to Berlin,
 The Kaiser he will say,
 ' Hoch, hoch, mein Gott,
 What a bloody rotten lot
 The Brit-ish—Rag-time—Cars.' "

Then they sang in place of " Amen "—" Neech-ev-oh "—the Russian soldier's word for every occasion (" It's nothing," " It doesn't matter," " Never mind," etc.), which the British men had soon learnt.

This parodying of hymns was much in vogue. Another song, sung to the tune of " Holy, holy, holy," was :

" Marching, marching, marching,
 Always bloody well marching,
 Marching up the mountain,
 Then march-ing—down—again."

And yet another :

" Looker-Lampson loves us,
 Looker-Lampson loves us,
 Looker-Lampson loves us—
 And so he bloody well ought."

The tunes that children sing at play had new words to them. I cannot recall the original words. The tunes I know well enough, but I cannot write them here. The words the men sang were these :

" We cannot ride in drozhkies,
 We cannot ride in drozhkies,
 We cannot ride in drozhkies—
 We've got no " dingi " left."

(" Dingi " is the Russian word for " Money ").
 Then a second verse :

" We cannot ride in drozhkies,
 We cannot ride in drozhkies,
 We cannot ride in drozhkies—
 We'll have to bloody well walk."

Another children's tune had the following words to it—also the composition of the force's poet :

" Why did I join the R.N.A.S. ?
 Why didn't I join the army ?
 Why did I come to Russia ?—
 I must have been bloody well barmy."

Sometimes a plaintive voice would sing a verse of "Home, Sweet Home" as a solo. . . . "There snow
 ply sly comb" . . . and all the men would shout a sort of auxiliary chorus :

" An' I down't supposse we'll see it agyne,
 For months an' months an' months . . . "

And there were other songs. . . . Alas ! even for the sake of realism, I cannot write them down. . . .

And the Russian soldiers' songs. . . . May I digress to tell you of them here ?

At six o'clock one morning in February, 1917 (I had been on duty all night), I saw a regiment of men trudging through the snow across the plain. It was bitterly cold—over twenty-five degrees of frost. The men were warmly clad but their faces were exposed. Many of them were *black with the frost*. Their lips were sagging down. Trickles of blood were frozen on their chins. . . . A terrible sight, these bundled-up men with the frozen faces at six o'clock on a winter morning. But the men were singing loudly as they marched. I could not distinguish the words. I asked the officer with me what they were. He told me. . . . In Russian they were these :

" Masha po lesu khodilla
 Chubareeki poteralla
 Chubaree—chubaree—
 Chubareeki chu—
 Poteralla."

Here is the translation :

" Masha in the forest went
 And lost her sandals."

"Chubareeki" is a 'Little Russian' word for the sandals, the "lapti" made of birch fibre which the Russian peasants wear. . . . That is the whole song they sang—"Masha in the forest went and lost her sandals!"

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There was something rousing in the tune. I had expected to hear martial words. A little song of Masha.

... This set me asking questions. Once I wrote that the Russian soldiers' songs were impressive. A verse sung softly by one man, then a loudly sung chorus by all the men together. . . . I wrote that the verses were as quiet prayers, the loud-sung choruses as anthems of praise. I judged at that time entirely by the tunes. There was nothing vaudevilly about them. They were very stirring, were these choruses. Alas! . . . Perhaps I am an idealist. I imagined words to fit the music. . . . Now that I know the words of some of the favourite marching songs of the Russian men, the idea of prayers and anthems has gone. But the simplicity of the songs impresses one. The words are just what these simple peasant men would sing. . . .

Here is the quiet-sung verse of one song that I have often heard the Russian soldiers sing when marching to the trenches :

"Zavae-ala zamela
Nas kholodnia zema."

"Then cold winter began to blow
And the snow began to drift."

Then came the stirring chorus sung by all the men :

"Solovei, Solovei, P'tashetshka,
Solovei, Paesinku Pyot, Pyot."

"The nightingale, the nightingale, is a little bird,
The nightingale sings a little song."

Then :

"Ras—Dva—
Gori ne Baeda
Solovei-ushka Paesinku Pyot."

"One—two—
Sorrow is no harm,
The little nightingale sings a little song."

("Solovei-ushka" is the diminutive of "solovei" and shows affection.)

These are other verses :

"Ne Proyekhat ne proitee,
Ne konika Provistee."

"One cannot ride, one cannot walk,
The little horse cannot pass."

And the chorus is sometimes varied thus :

" Solovei, Solovei, P'tashetchks,
Kanareitchka zhalobna Pyot, Pyot, Pyot.

Ras, dva,
Gori ne Baeda

Kanareitchka zhalobna pyot."

"The nightingale, the nightingale is a little bird,
The little canary plaintively sings, sings, sings.
One, two,
Sorrow is no harm,
The little canary plaintively sings."

And songs of love. . . . This is one :

" Tree Derevni, dva sala,
Vosem devok odine ya,
Koodah devki, toodah ya.
Devki v'less ya za neemee
Devki s'lesso ee ya s'neemee
Razgovarivaya."

" Three hamlets, two villages,
Eight girls, I only,
Where the girls go, there go I.
Girls in the woods, I go with them,
Girls out of the woods, I go with them,
We converse."

The men sing the last line—" Razgova-a-ar-i-va-ya."

There is a longer song about " Donnia ":

" In the smithy the young blacksmiths
Work and sing :
' Come along, come along, Donnia,
Come along, come along, Donnia,
Come along, Donnia, in the forest,
Come along, Donnia, in the forest.' "

and many verses in which the lover buys for Donnia a *sarafan* (gown without sleeves) for the fête. . . .

But the favourite song of all the Russian men, the one heard most on the Russian Front, and, indeed throughout all Russia, is the song of " Stenka Reizin." Stenka—the English is " Steve "—was a Don Cossack brigand of the long ago, and in some ways a very good fellow. He robbed the rich that he might give money to the poor. His charity, however, was not sufficient to cover the multitude of his sins—so he was eventually hanged. The years have changed his thefts to acts of grace ; the hangman's noose has become a halo. He is now a very popular hero. . . . As the Russian soldiers

sing the song, there is something very sad about the tune.

And the theme? . . . Stenka has been on a plundering trip down the Volga and across the Caspian to Persia. He has returned with much rich plunder—and a beautiful Persian princess of whom his beloved followers are jealous. . . .

On the broad waves of the river, says the song, from behind an island sail out the boats of Stenka Reizin. On the first sits Stenka embracing the princess, celebrating his union with her. He is gay—and tipsy. From behind him comes the murmur of his followers—“He has exchanged us for a woman!”

“The stern robber chief hears that murmur and derision. With one powerful hand he seizes the body of the Persian lady. His dark brows contract, a threat runs on them, the eyes of the robber fill with angry blood. ‘I will give all! I will spare nothing! . . . I will even give my own impetuous head!’ His powerful voice reaches to the shore.

“And she, with eyes shut, neither alive nor dead, hears in silence the drunken words of the robber chief:

‘Volga, Volga, native mother,
Volga, Russian river,
Thou hast not seen the present
Of the Don Cossack.’

“With one flourish he raises the beautiful princess and casts her overboard into the rushing waves. . . .”

Stenka, in the last verse, addresses his men :

“‘Whatever quarrel was between free folk—
Volga, Volga, native mother,
Accept the beautiful woman. . . .
Why are you devils so low-spirited?
Ach! thou joker, Filka, dance!
Sing, brothers, at random
To the memory of her soul’!” . . .

In soldiers’ songs the tune’s the thing. . . . Perhaps the Russian folk who heard “We are Fred Karno’s Navy” were impressed with the beauty and solemnity of the tune. . . . And that brings me back to the British men, who are still on the river barge. . . . It is a long way from the Volga to the Danube. . . .

Again we moved down-stream at night, this time as

far as Galatz. Saturday, December 16, found us opposite the town, the Red Cross barge still at our side. It was a misty day, but not too cold, so I sat at one end of the deck and smoked. And suddenly I heard voices from behind a staff car. The voices of some Englishmen with an Irish brogue every now and then.

" . . . And a verra good fella he was. Wan of the best."

" My bloke"—evidently an orderly speaking—" my bloke ain't wounded yet. I don't wish 'im no 'arm—oh no!—but when 'e is wounded I 'ope they kills 'im orf."

" . . . Ach ! he's not a bad fella at awl."

" 'Nancy,' I calls 'im—an' I ain't never at peace until th' old lady's in bed."

" Th' worst o' th' lot's that mouldy-w'iskered old blanker, Blank."

" We want *officers*," said another voice. " We want *officers*. . . . What have we here ?—Eh-merchoors"—I spell the last word as it was pronounced. The " Eh " was long drawn out. . . .

A man came along the deck singing :

" Why did I join the R.N.A.S. ?
Why didn't I join the army ?
Why did I come to Roumania ? "

Then all together shouted the concluding line so that the sudden burst of sound was startling :

" We must have been bloody well barmy ! "

Galatz. . . . Great warehouses and huge reservoirs of oil at the water's edge. Like Braila it must have been a very prosperous town before the war. Enormous lighters lay along the north bank. As large as small ships, are these Danube barges. Some had Russian names and some Roumanian, and very many were Greek owned and Greek named. Russian gun-boats hurried up the stream, and small river steamers packed with refugees went quickly down towards Reni, helped by the swiftness of the strong current. Barges, too, went down-stream, loaded with army wagons and artillery and horses and machinery taken from the towns and factories in the wake of our retreat. Some

barges loaded with Russian soldiers went up the river. . . . The Dobruja had been manned almost entirely with Russians, and now Russia was taking up a line north of the river, west of Braila. Russian soldiers were in evidence everywhere ; one saw surprisingly few Roumanian men. . . .

Lunch-time, and our orderly, not Hawkins, brought me bully beef and biscuits.

"Sorry, sir," he said apologetically, "only bully to-day."

"Only bully" had been for many days with the exception of Hawkins' mutton chops.

"Listen," said I. "Now be honest—What do you orderlies eat while your officers have corned beef and biscuits ?"

"Well, sir," said he, "I'll tell the truth. Pancykes and rissoles. . . . I'm a good cook, I am. Very nice rissoles I can make. An' a tin o' milk an' a tin o' jam are A1 for pancykes. Believe me, sir, very good pancykes."

"I believe you," said I.

"We laugh, sir," he told me without shame, "when we give cold bully an' biscuits to our blo— to our officers, and then go away an' cook a tasty meal on the 'Primus' . . . Do you blame us, sir ? "

"I don't know," said I. "Just be a good fellow and go off and make me some rissoles and a pancake for lunch and then I'll tell you."

And half an hour later I assured him—which I had no right to do—that I did not blame him in the least. . . .

Oh ! those Danube days ! . . . The muddy, oily stream ; the marshy banks ; the craft upon the river's breast. . . . The morning mist that shrouded us all day ; the foggy river air at night. The days of sunshine and the evenings of glorious sunset. Golden sun, and sky of cinnamon—then purple plum—and then the blueness of the night. . . . The dampness and the gloominess and the cheerlessness of the little smelly stern cabin. The cackling geese, the grunting pigs, the barking dogs upon our barge. . . . The morning wash upon the slippery deck ; the morning mug of Danube water tea ; the daily bully beef and hard ship's biscuits.

Oh ! those Danube days ! . . . The tiresome inactivity when all the stream was active. The want of news when history was being made within a dozen miles. The optimistic and the pessimistic hours. The weariness of a drear retreat ; the uncertainty of the future days. . . . The splashing of the stream all day and night, and the queer gurglings underneath the floor when at last one lay down to sleep. And those cheerful men in the rat-and-lice-infested hold—where the larger vermin even invaded the men's sleeping bunks and the smaller ones had to be carefully picked from clothing twice a day.

Oh ! those Danube days ! . . . "Blue Danube" of one's ball-room thoughts. "Blue Danube" that one dreamt of in the long ago when lights were bright and when laughter and gaiety were on every side. "Blue Danube"—and a dirty greasy barge. . . . "Blue Danube" with its breast covered with oil inch deep ; with its towns that we were leaving far behind ; with its river traffic making for the sea. . . .

A tug came in the evening and towed us down the stream. The bargee and his mate and all the English officers were not on board. An anxious wife was worried — but the British men had not a single care. . . .

A burly naval policeman came along the deck.

"Mr. —, sir ?" said he.

"On shore," I said.

"Mr. —, sir ?"

"Also not at home."

"Mr. —, sir ?"

"Missing," said I. "So are they all."

"Very good, sir," he said. Then, accepting the inevitable, "Prisoners all turned in, sir. . . . No complaints."

"Thanks," said I.

And so, really, for a day I was captain of His Britannic Majesty's Roumanian Barge, No. 620.

We came to Reni when the sun had sunk, when all the steamer lamps were lit, when yellow lights shone

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from the busy shore, when camp fires burned upon the ground above the quay. . . . Barges and tugs and steamers all were gathered there. It was a stopping-place upon the way to sea. And there the British officers all came on board. They had travelled in an earlier steamer down the stream.

CHAPTER XIII

RENI TO PETROGRAD

RENI is Russian. It is the frontier town. The settlement itself lies north and east of the railway station. Low, one-storied houses for the most part, and very dirty little shops. Down by the river is a narrow quay backed by steep cliffs of sand. Above these, on the plateau that runs up to the railway lines, there was a Russian soldiers' camp. It was the same as all the other Russian camps I have seen—wagons and horses, and hay in bales and corn in leaking sacks, and untidy heaps of other stores. Men resting on the damp ground. Soldiers' washing hanging up to dry—it is always washing day in camp. A narrow muddy cutting ran from the quay to a level crossing by which one reached the main road that led eastwards to the station and the town.

West of the camp, between the river and the railway line, there was a pleasure garden, a bare untidy place with muddy narrow paths. Some brightly-painted wooden buildings, at right angles to the river, faced the garden from the west. Before Roumania entered into war these were probably tea houses and pavilions. They were now the offices and staff quarters of the Russian Naval men on Danube service. In the centre of the garden were a couple of eagles in a large dirty cage. Moulting eagles, very bare in places, with looks of utter weariness and sorrow. Their talons were red with the blood of their raw meat allowance; their breasts and the cage wall too were stained. A coloured photograph of them would have made an excellent war cartoon. . . .

Tied to the quay were many river lighters, two large passenger steamers and some smaller river boats. Other barges were tied up to the ones next the shore and still other barges to these, so that they lay in layers three and even four deep. But the edge of the river was so shallow that the barges could not come close up. Gangways had to be made with planks from the quay to the decks. Most of the barges that had come down-stream were loaded with army wagons, artillery and stores. These were landed at Reni; the empty barges were loaded with machinery and wood and iron brought earlier from evacuated Roumanian towns. Later they would go down-stream towards the Black Sea. Hundreds of Austrian prisoners of war were working as lighter-men. One saw Austrian prisoners on the quay and at the station and in the town, walking about without any escort. The men, indeed, seemed to have more liberty than the Russian soldiers had.

On the quay, at the foot of the sand cliffs, a row of women was selling white bread and pancakes and sun-flower seed and other luxuries. Babushka and Tyotha—"Grandinamma and Auntie"—the same old firm that one sees at every railway station and barrack town throughout Russia. But I had not before seen British soldiers bargaining for the women's wares. The customers were very mixed. Russian soldiers and sailors, British naval armoured car men, Austrian prisoners and Roumanian soldiers and refugees. . . . Then arrived a party of British refugees. They were chiefly managers and engineers of oil wells and their wives and families. They stood apart from the others. These were the first British refugees I had seen. I think they must have found comfort in the presence of the cheerful British soldiers.

The unloading of the British squadron's barges (an earlier one had preceded No. 620 from Hirsova) commenced. Again the men ran about like ants—carrying big tins of biscuits one at a time; boxes of bully beef and stores. The cars were taken off the barges and stationed on the quay, thus making it more narrow than ever and making traffic very difficult. The men's kit-bags were also stacked on the quay in a line parallel to the river. Opposite them was a heap of sundry stores

and some very smelly bullock skins (leather was very valuable in Russia). A couple of British sentries walked in the narrow space between. Passing Russian soldiers watched the British men at work. They had never seen British soldiers before. Naturally they were curious. They noted the excellence of the men's clothes and boots. I heard some Russians marvelling on the strangeness of British men—all of whom were clean-shaven. "No Englishman has any hair on his face," said one authority.

Sometimes the Russians were puzzled as to the nationality of the strange soldiers in khaki.

"Roumanski ?" they asked each other. Or "Serbski ?" . . . I saw some Russian soldiers stiffly saluting the British men, feeling sure that they must be officers.

Monday, the 18th, was quiet. Many of the barges had gone down-stream. A large number of Russian soldiers had also proceeded up the river. We had nothing to do all day—but wait. In the evening I overheard another conversation between two of the British men. They were sitting on the deck of the barge where we still lived. One of them was reading an English newspaper at least three months old.

"'Ow about this, Fred ?" said he, reading aloud. "'Palladium. Always th' best variety entertainment in London. Three performances daily—2.30, 6.10 an' 9' . . . Wot's th' time, Fred ? . . . A bite o' food an' a pint an' then th' third 'ouse ?"

"Oh, shut up !" came the voice of Fred. "'Ave some bloody decency !"

The other man read the list of performers. Then, "Jack !" he called. "'Ere, Jack !"

Jack came along smoking a briar pipe. "'Ello ?" he said.

"'Ow about it, Jack ? . . . Palladium. Three performances daily—2.30, 6.10 an' 9. . . . 'Ow about th' nine o'clock 'ouse ?"

"Go to 'ell !" said Jack severely, and he went off along the deck again puffing hard at his pipe.

"Answers to Correspondents," said the reader a few minutes later. "Listen to this, Fred. Wot a bloody scream ! . . . 'H.M.T. . . . You must be very

careful to avoid catching cold in these chilly autumn nights.' "

" Wot's it this time ? " interrupted Fred. " Always drink Oxo ' or not ? . . . I know th' gyme."

" Straight, this is," said the man with the paper.

" Always wear a warm overcoat when you go out—,"

" 'Ope Brothers, 'ope," interrupted Fred.

" —an' when leavin' an 'eated room be sure an' 'ave your throat well protected against th' night air.' "

" Bloody slacker ! " said Fred contemptuously. " Do 'im good to be 'ere for a bit."

" Mebbe 'e's a gel ? " suggested the other.

" But she don't wrap up 'er throat," said the observer-vant Fred.

Another man joined the two.

" Any murders, ole boy ? " he said.

" Murders ? " said the two.

" Yes—murders. 'Orrible murders. . . . Give us a bit o' excitement. This bloody war's dull enough."

" Nothin' doin'," said the man with the paper. " A few killin'-offs—but that ain't murder. . . . 'Ere's somethin' interestin'. . . ."

And once again he cruelly suggested the third house of the Palladium. . . .

More refugees arrived on crowded river steamers on December 19. Amongst them were several Roumanian officers with their women folks. I met an Englishman amongst the new arrivals. He knew Roumania well and his news was not very cheering. According to him, the Germans in many places had met with practically no opposition on their entry into Roumania. One pass of which he knew was so narrow that one or two machine-guns could have checked the enemy. But this pass, said he, had not been defended at all. . . . There is one story which many people told. I do not write it as a fact; its truth I do not know; but I write of it to show the opinion that most people had of the Roumanians' action in the war. . . . Some German soldiers, weary of war, deserted from their ranks, meaning to give themselves up. They reached a certain small Roumanian town, but the soldiers had all gone away, so the Germans took possession of it and doubtless received an Iron Cross apiece for their enterprise. . . . I repeat

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that I do not know how true this story was, but certainly many such stories were told and one was inclined to give way to an insidious pessimism. . . .

That same evening Commander Gregory, R.N., and a squadron of fighting cars came up the river from Tulsha. They had remained at Hirsova until the last possible moment, then the Russian Staff had given orders to them to retreat, so they made the journey across the Dobruja to a town lower down the river than Reni. The roads were very difficult—muddy and greasy, but the cars all arrived safely. The Russians evacuated Tulsha to take up a position on the north bank of the river soon after the British cars had left for Reni. The Bulgarians then occupied the town. Next evening a force of fighting cars left Reni to go to Bala by barge. Lieutenant Smiles, who had just recovered from shrapnel wounds in the arm and leg, went in charge. The last steamers and barges from Braila and Galatz arrived, bringing more refugees with them.

Before the British armoured cars again left for the position west of Braila the men had been working in shifts, loading and unloading the barges. These were then by this time all occupied or partly occupied with British cars and army stores and men. The position near Braila was such that the Russian authorities were not quite certain what to do. . . . Some men worked till midnight and then others came on duty. I saw some men who were aroused from sleep at 12 a.m. to go on duty. They came up the steps from the barge's hold yawning and grumbling.

"Wot a life!" said one man. "Wot a life! . . . We might as well be livin' in a bloody fire station!"

You may have read that remark in *Punch*. I do not know! I only know that I sent it to that journal, but whether it was "good enough for *Punch*" or not I cannot tell at the moment of writing. Anyhow, the words were doubtless modified if they appeared in that highly respectable journal.

On Friday, December 22, at three o'clock in the morning, an excited Roumanian bargeman came to our little cabin and said some words to us in Roumanian. After a few minutes he managed to explain in Russian

that we must leave at once. I dressed and went on shore to find out what the position was. Only a sentry or two were to be seen. But as I neared the Russian naval quarters two officers came out and made towards a little steamer near our barge. I spoke to them.

"Oh! to-morrow!" they said. "See us to-morrow about it."

Then I met another official who told me that all the barges that were bound for towns further down the stream must leave at once, as the Bulgarians would probably be in Tulsha during the day, and they would be able to cut off all retreat by river. This did not concern us very much, so I returned to bed. When I rose again all the barges except ours had gone away. More men were encamped on the plateau that lay on a level with the railway line. A number of guns were in position to command the river and the Dobruja bank of the Danube. At night the plateau was dotted with camp fires. Trains arrived with more Russian men and guns.

Meanwhile the British squadron did excellent work west of Braila. After trying one or two roads which were found to be impossible for motor car traffic, the squadron found a good road to Vizerul. On reaching the position they immediately went into action and continued to attack for several days. Lieutenant Smiles was wounded, but continued on duty, scorning hospitals. Eventually the Russians had to retreat as the right wing was being pushed back. Two of the British cars under Lieutenant Arrol-Hunter and Second Lieutenant Kidd were told off to cover the Russians' retreat. At half-past ten at night the cars went up to the enemy's lines and opened fire, continuing until the ammunition was spent. By this time the Russian infantry had retreated successfully, so the British cars were able to return. Unfortunately Second Lieutenant Kidd's car ran into a shell-hole and had its steering gear smashed. Lieutenant Arrol-Hunter destroyed the car, took the crew on board his own, and reached the Russians' new position successfully. This broken motor-car was so far the only one that the British Expeditionary Force had lost. Some days later Lieutenant Smiles again went into

action and drove the Bulgars out of a village so that the Russians were enabled to advance and occupy it. The difficulties that had to be faced were very great. The roads, where roads existed, were deep in mud and almost impossible for motor cars. And the shell-pocked No Man's Land—at midnight, in the dark! . . .

Unfortunately towards the end of December I was far from well. I had pains somewhere in my left side. I know so little about my inner self that I thought I had heart trouble. Perhaps I smoked too much, I thought, and I dreaded the doctor telling me that I must put my pipe away, so I did not consult him. I had slept on damp floors and in the chilly wet cabin of the Danube barge—so that, later, when I summoned up courage to consult a doctor in Petrograd and was told that I had had pleurisy for five weeks—I marvelled. . . . “You are better now,” said the doctor. Which I knew. If I had not been better I would not have been brave enough to hear his verdict!

I went to Petrograd via Odessa. I took the English mail with me and I, who loved the Censor not, became that dreaded much-damned man myself. . . . What a wonderful book a Censor could write—if he—or she—would but allow it! I had at least five hundred letters to read—and they were five hundred human stories. Letters of love; and letters very cold. Letters of longing and letters of sheer light-heartedness. Letters whose writers tried to hide their loneliness—but failed; and letters bluntly crude and almost indifferent. Letters long and letters short. I wish that I could print a score of them in full, as examples of the others.

“Dear Mate,” some man wrote to his wife, “I'm in the pink. You might send me some Gold Flake cigarettes and some insect powder. Yours——” and then the Christian name. And that was all.

Some others wrote letters of great length with descriptions of scenery and war; with humour and pathos intermixed; with not a word about the things that they would like to have from home. Some men who had no time to write two notes wrote to their mothers, sending messages to their wives. . . . And all of these wrote

as boys do. . . . Some wrote to their sweethearts urging them to remain true, and threatening personal destruction if the love that was should wane. Others talked of marriage, and others talked only of the happy past. And many, many were full of typical British grumbles—the food, the hours, the weather, the lack of letters and a score or more of other grievances. Some wished that they had never volunteered; others assured the folk at home that it was "great sport." And in one, an Irish one, I learned exactly how the folk of Erin speak. The writer spelt the words phonetically, and thus I know that "girl" in Ireland is not "gerrul" as some writers write, but "gairl."

"We are going to have a merry Xmas—I don't think!" wrote a humorist. "I heard someone say the other day there's a war on at present. I suppose that must be the cause of it." And he went on to write, "We have not mixed our Xmas puddings yet, as someone has stolen the two currants."

What a wonderful book the Censor could write—if he or she would but allow it! . . . I learned of escapades that would have cost the writers much field punishment if these outings had been known; of opinions of their officers that fortunately the officers could not see: of criticism of the Powers that were and of the things they should have done; of rumours and of secret plans that were quite non-existent at the Staff. And the stories of the insect-infested, rat-inhabited hold of that Danube barge were creepy as the hold itself had been. But these complaints were not serious. The men told of the fun of the daily "hunts" and of the joy that came with the kill. Blackpool, said some; Margate, said others—were not to be compared with the river quarters they had had. I found a certain amount of humour in these yarns. But I had found no humour—and I find none now—in the unwelcome guests who came to dine. . . .

To Petrograd on December 31. That same night came news of Rasputin's death. Many versions of the incident were told. Then rumours came that he was still alive. . . . Finally the Press, which had referred

to the assassination but had not dared to mention the dead man's name, stated that in truth the *bête noir* was dead. And Russia breathed freely.

We did not know so then, but we see now that the removal of Rasputin was one of the first steps towards the day in March when the Old Order ceased to be and when Russia gained the freedom of which she had so long dreamt.

CHAPTER XIV

THE RUSSIAN FRONT AGAIN

I HAVE read in English newspapers that the Australian and Canadian soldiers on leave in London weary after a few days and long to go back to the front. The comment on this was that the men were so patriotic that they were happy only when fighting to crush the enemy. That, bluntly, is rot. No sane man yearns to return to the position simply for the sake of warring there. (In parenthesis : the badly wounded soldier who frets in hospital because he is anxious to go to the trenches again is not honest with himself—or he is a fiction soldier only.) I can understand the feelings of the Colonial men, for I also, in Petrograd, wearied for the battle zone again. Not because I love it—how can anyone say he does ?—but because it was to me the lesser of two evils. I was lost in Petrograd. I was a very lonely soldier in a very crowded place. I was restless. I did not know where to go or what to do. There were disquieting rumours on all sides. There is no such pessimism at the front as one finds in the safety of the far-back towns. Everybody except myself had something to do. Of all the deadly sins that harry us, the deadliest is *ennui*.

And, having written this, I find that I can understand the wounded soldier, too. Perhaps he really does express a wish to go back to the front. But that is because the hospital ward and the pain he suffers are worse to him than the battle line and the open air and the health that once was his. It must be very dull in hospital ; no one can grumble at the lack of excitement in the Western zone of fire. But it is a morbid wish, this wish to go back to the front—the morbid wish of a

sick and suffering man. What he really wishes is that he be strong and fit again—that he will have the strength and fitness that he had when he first set out to France. . . . When he is well again, when he is able to leave the hospital and go forth to the outer world, when he is with his friends at home—then, I am sure, he does not want to live trench life again. Anything is better than boredom and physical suffering—even the hell of war. One has good company there, and, to be candid, there is a certain fascination. . . .

I wearied for the battle zone again. I wearied for my friends there, for a horse, for a faithful soldier servant, for the open spaces, for the freedom—and the thrill—of the life. I even wearied for a dug-out home again. . . . My charming hosts, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Thornton of Petrograd, will forgive me. Only I can know how very kind they were. Yet I had lost the taste for kindness. The doctor called my trouble “neurasthenia.” He ordered me to go to a sanatorium for three months. “What you need is fresh air, and outdoor exercise, and quiet, and much sleep,” said he. So I went to Moscow in January—on my way back to the Russian Front. . . .

At the end of January I arrived at Minsk. It was the Minsk of a year before, with this difference—the officers I saw waiting in the crowded, smoky buffet room of the railway station were all more aged, more tired-looking, all more ill in appearance than they had been when last I was in Minsk. The change was very noticeable. I met men who knew me, but I had difficulty in recognising them, so altered were their faces. The strain, even of waiting, doing nothing, had told on them. My friends assured me I was stouter, which was a great disappointment to me, who considered myself a sick man and who wanted sympathy, not congratulations. . . .

The town was unaltered. The same confusion in the station. The same lines of army wagons in the main streets. The same congestion of traffic underneath the bridge on which the Molodetchno railway ran. The same clumsy wooden sledges, driven by little boys or women or old men—too old to be of service at the war. The same groups of soldiers in the streets—the same

officers muffled up in fur-lined coats and woollen scarves and lamb-skin hats. The same dirty little shops—with high prices of what goods there were, but with the same absence of commodities of a year before.

My train left for Zamerie at five o'clock in the evening—at least it was supposed to leave then, and we were all aboard, but it was seven before we got away. The same gloomy, ill-lit second-class compartments with a single candle behind a smoke-blackened lantern glass at each end. Officers and doctors and sisters. Also much baggage—and little conversation. One talks *en route* to Petrograd; one does not speak much on the way to the position. One dozes—the slow rumble is a lullaby. . . . Zamerie at nine. Very cold—but a Red Cross tea-room was fairly comfortable. I had to wait seven hours there. It was a white-washed room with a large stove at the two ends. Rough wooden tables and benches stood near the stoves. If one wanted to eat or to drink tea, one paid fifty kopecks as admission to a table, where peasant women served tea, unlimited, and where one could have a meal of black bread and cheese and cold sausage.

I read an old copy of the *Saturday Evening Post*, a five-cent journal which I had bought in Moscow for one and sixpence. (The advertisements are most interesting; I even prefer them to the excellent literary contributions.) A little spectacled colonel noticed the journal, and paused in his pacing up and down the room. The advertisement pages that I was glancing at were printed in bold type. Not Russian—then which? . . . I looked up to find the Colonel staring intently at me. I was not Russian—then what? . . . The Colonel was suspicious. He conferred with a young officer in a corner opposite me, regarding, I am sure, me and my nationality, because the two of them then commenced to walk slowly up and down the room, coming near me and nearer until they were able to see exactly what paper I was reading, what epaulettes I was wearing, and what I looked like at close range.

Then they conferred again, and the younger man came over to the stove against which I was sitting and looked at me from behind. A few minutes later the little Colonel came and asked me if he might have the sugar

which stood in front of me. This in spite of the presence of ample sugar on the table at his side of the room. I answered him in one word, "Mozhno," which means "It is allowed." He hesitated for a moment or two then lost courage and went away to his own side of the room without another word. Also without the sugar, which he had apparently forgotten. Later on he returned to my side, stood at the stove for a while, and ventured to ask me to which station I was going. I told him—also in one word.

"—— Division ?" he asked.

"Yes," said I, after a pause in which I tried to appear suspicious. "Is that your division ?"

"You must not ask !" he cried. "You must not ask !"

"Very well," said I, huffed, "please do not question me. You, also, must not ask me where I am going or to what division I am attached."

He glared angrily at me but did not speak. Then he went away to his own seat, and the younger man joined him for another conference. Only we three were in the room, beside two peasant women who sat yawning near the door that led to the kitchen, and a sleeping peasant boy who woke up at intervals to stoke the stoves with wood. The little Colonel wanted very much to know why I, a foreigner, was there, but he did not summon up enough courage to ask me to show him my passport. Several times he came towards me, but always he hesitated and finally returned to his seat. No one has ever asked me for my passport on the Russian Front.

Three o'clock, and a party of officers arrived by road. They wished to travel by train to Minsk. They would have to wait until our train came and went with us and then returned again. They were all half frozen in spite of ear muffs and mufflers and woolly hats and camel wool hoods and thick fur-lined coats. They stamped up and down the room, breathing on their fingers and rubbing their noses and cheeks and ears. The peasant women aroused themselves to get some glasses of tea. The boy left his corner by the stove to collect half a rouble from each man.

I opened my paper again and commenced to read. More glances and whispers, then I heard the words, "English language," then "Englishman" I continued to read, but, without looking up, I could see the little Colonel join the group. "Anglachanyin?" I heard him whisper. "Certainly," came the answer. . . . So all was well. When at last the train came the little Colonel smiled quite kindly on me and told me that it was the one on which I must travel.

This train was in total darkness. The candles had burned out and no one had troubled to renew them. I felt my way to a vacant seat, found one, lay down on it and fell asleep, in spite of another later arrival sitting down on my legs. He struck a match, saw me and apologised, and found another vacant seat. I arrived at P—— in daylight. It was bitterly cold. A sledge had come for my baggage and another one drawn by three horses for myself. So off I went—a distance of ten miles.

The plains had all been levelled with the snow. What routes there were from point to point were marked with fir branches, showing very black against the snow. There were no trees; only the tops of little shrubs were to be seen. All the larger wood had been cut down to supply timber for bridges and roads across the marshy ground that spring would expose to view. . . . Seven miles with only one cottage and a barn on the way. Then a grey village with soldiers at the wells drawing water for their morning tea. Then across another plain where tree stumps and shrubs showed from out the snow. A wide wood had once been here; it, too, had been cut down to make the marshes passable. Past a great orchard with rows and rows of trees and so towards my new camp. A dug-out room beneath the level of the ground, well heated with a wood stove. There was a samovar steaming on a wooden bench. And there was Grigorie, my new *denstchik* (orderly) to give me a welcoming grin.

"Good morning," said I.

Grigorie held himself very stiffly.

"I wish you health, your nob—your high nobility," he shouted, a little uncertain of my rank and anxious to err safely.

"Cold," said I.

"Precisely so, your high nobility, cold; freezing; north wind," and he told me particulars of it in a thin voice. I did not understand them all. Enough to know the main fact—twenty-five degrees of frost.

Grigorie I will tell you about him.

CHAPTER XV

GRIGORIE

GRIGORIE is my *denstchik*—my orderly—and if there is a more homely-looking man in all the Russian Army, I do not want to see him. When I write “homely,” I write in the diminutive. Grigorie is not—to use a common phrase—an oil-painting. . . . I can describe beauty with a certain amount of ease, because it is a pleasure to do so; but to describe Grigorie is indeed difficult—I hate to weigh his features one by one and find them wanting. Bad enough to know that the *tout ensemble* is unlovely; one hesitates to think of details. Still—you must see him as I do—so here goes! . . .

This orderly of mine is a huge fellow, tall and stout and strong. Not too stout; stocky, I think, is the word I may write. There is nothing particularly the matter with his figure; it is simply all wrong. An absence of line, though not of symmetry. You will understand me if I say he is a barge of a man and not a schooner. . . . Enormous hands. The right one has two fingers missing. A German bullet shattered them. It is for this reason that he is an orderly and now no longer needs to fight. Three-fingered men are awkward with their rifles. . . . He has a big roundish head, clean shaven. Two ugly scars run across the top. More German bullets. And now his face. . . . He has the sort of face that might belong to a very young man or to a very old one. A wrinkled, brown-skinned face that still has the smoothness of youth on it. One reads that youthful sign between the lines. At twenty yards he might be clean-shaven. Seen close to, one notices a

patchy unshaven chin with thin, straggly reddish hair upon it ; also a pale coloured, uneven moustache. High cheek-bones and tiny grey eyes—all of Mongol shape. He comes from some far corner of Siberia. I am sure there is some Chinese blood in his veins. . . . A broad, squat nose and a mouth of broken teeth—all colours except the colour they should be. . . . I fear you do not see him as I do—but, after all, it is not a matter for regret.

If there is a more homely soldier than Grigorie in all the Russian Army, I do not want to see him. But if there is a man with a bigger heart ; if there is a more faithful self-appointed slave ; if there is a more devoted attendant ; if there is a kinder soul or, indeed, a better fellow, then I—well, do not tell me of him. I will not believe you, and, anyhow, I want always to think of Grigorie as the *denstchik* supreme. The humour of it all is that Grigorie is a savage. He is not *pravoslavic*—he is not “orthodox.” He is not Catholic—nor is he Lithuanian or Mohammedan nor even is he a Jew. He is nothing at all. Just a heathen—but if one of these shells that are hurtling up as I write should happen in on Grigorie and me, I will ask the Saints for nothing more but that I go with him to his appointed place. For heathen, such as he, a special heaven is. . . . True, Grigorie says “Kava Bogu!”—“Glory be to God!”—at least a score of times each day, but that is just a habit—as saying “damn” and “hell” is now habitual to me. “Kava Bogu” means nothing to him ; some of my swear words mean the same to me. Grigorie’s religion—but he does not call it that—is that of faithful service. It is the religion of love and duty. It is practical. I find it better than a creed of words.

I will tell you of his duties. In the early morning, before it is yet light, I usually awake to find him tip-toeing clumsily into my sleeping quarters to light the small wood stove. I feign to be asleep. It would break his heart if he thought that he had wakened me. He puts some sticks and logs into the stove and sets the smaller bits alight. Then he kneels down before the little fire, and blows and blows until the danger of it going out is past. He is a sort of human bellows. It is when he is puffing and snorting at the stove that I see

Grigorie at his worst. A sort of ape-like profile, a greasy skin, mouth puckered up, then opened for more air—with the rising, falling flames glowing on his face, and one eye shining like a little bead. . . . Then Grigorie tip-toes out, elephaninely, and if I do not fall asleep again I hear him at the rites of cleaning cooking pans and tin plates and enamelled cups. Also I hear him fussing about preparing for my morning meal. Then he tip-toes in again and cautiously approaches to my bed. When still two yards away he crouches down and reaches out an arm towards my boots. He takes them with the gestures of a thief, and creeps away again. I hear a boot-brush vigorously applied. I hear Grigorie spit. Our blacking certainly is dry. . . . He puts the boots beside my bed, goes for a basin and jug of water, and quietly waits until I wake, standing by the door ready to serve me when the moment comes.

I wake up gradually. I blink at him. He stands motionless, his face without expression.

"Good morning, Grigorie," I say.

"I wish you health, your high nobility," says he.

I partly dress. He helps me with my boots. He places the basin on a stool. When I am ready he hands me the soap and pours water into my hands ; and I wash. It is like bathing at a running tap, only easier—one does not have to turn it on or off. Grigorie does all that. He pours, and stops, and pours again. Finally he hands me my towel and asks if he may remove the basin. I mutter "Yes" from behind the towel, and out he goes. He fetches in tea and black bread and a demi-round of cheese or a dish of cold, red, marbled sausage cut in slices. And he watches me all the time so that he can refill my cup when I am ready.

Breakfast over, he washes up and makes my bed and sweeps the floor and wipes my table and my stool ; and carries water and chops firewood and makes my dinner, and serves it, and washes up and wipes the table and sees to the samovar ; then tea—and later, supper and more washing up, more wiping of the table, and a special stoking of the stove ; then he sits in his little den, between the inner and the outer door, and sings un-musically in a quiet, dreary voice. His duties never end until I fall asleep. Then he lies down between the doors,

amongst the pans and logs and odds and ends, and spends the night as watch-dog-sentinel. Sometimes when it was very cold during the winter, I have seen him creep into my room at three o'clock in the morning to re-light the stove so that I, the lord and master, should be warmer. And that underground room, without a stove, was icy cold. Grigorie's den must have been doubly so, but any temperature less chilly than twenty degrees of frost was mild to him. He is one man in the millions that form the Russian Army.

Any faults he has are the outcome of his goodness.

"Golubchik" ("Little Pigeon") said I to him one day. "I'm going to sleep for a couple of hours, so please call me at five o'clock certain." I had had no sleep for two nights and was very tired.

"I listen, your high nobility," said he. "I will attend to you."

"Five—exact," said I. "Thou understandest?"

"Precisely so, your high nobility, I understand. I will attend," he said.

I slept and awoke in the dark.

"Grigorie!" I called.

"I, your high nobility," said he, appearing almost before I had said the last syllable of his name. He stood at attention as he always does.

"Devil knows!" I swore. "What time is it?"

"Eight o'clock, your high nobility. . . . Eight o'clock exact."

"I said five! . . . Thou understandest? . . . Five!" I said, a little louder than I usually speak.

"Your high nobility," he said in his thin, wheezy voice, "I came at five, but you were asleep and I was afraid."

He smiled timidly at me.

"Listen!" said I. "When I am asleep thou does not need to be afraid. When I am awake—yes, if thou wishest; but when I am asleep—no."

"Precisely so, your high nobility. I will attend. I understand."

"Nothing more," said I, and I went off to the duty I should have been at three hours before.

But I felt all the better for my rest.

II

The language of the Russian soldier is a language quite apart. He never says "Yes," and he never says "No," when answering his officers. "Tak tochno" ("Precisely so") and "Neekak n'yet" ("Not so, no") are what he says instead. He never answers "I do not know." "Ya ne mogu z'nat" ("I am not able to know") is the recognised phrase. He punctuates each sentence his officer says to him with such remarks as "I understand," "I listen," "I will attend," and "Precisely so." If an officer says "Thanks," the Russian soldier answers "Rad staratsia" ("I am glad that you are pleased"). He never says "Thank you"; he always says "I respectfully thank you." If an officer said—I write in the past tense now—"How do you do?" or "Good health!" or "Good morning," the soldier answered with a short, "I wish you health, your nobility," or "Your high nobility," as the case might be. And the officers always speak to him as "Thou." It was a sign of servitude, this second person singular. . . . One says "Thou" in Russian to servants, and to one's wife, and to God. . . .

Poor Grigorie spoke very much as a parrot might speak. He gave his responses mechanically. Sometimes he mixed his answers up, so that when I said, "Thanks" to him, he shouted "I respectfully thank you." And at least on one occasion, when I was suffering from a sprain and when I told him I was ill, he shouted, "I am glad that you are pleased, your high nobility." There was no recognised formulated answer, and he did not know what to say, got nervous, and said the wrong thing. Greater men in such circumstances have committed greater *faux pas*.

With the coming of this New Russia, the Old Order has changed. Officers no longer can say "Thou." All soldiers must be spoken to as "You." Soldiers no longer need say "Your high nobility," "Your excellence," or such-like forms of address. "Mr. Commander," "Mr. Captain," "Mr. Colonel," and "Mr. General" are the official terms to be used. I explained this to Grigorie.

" And you are 'you' now," said I, " not 'thou.' Dost—do you understand ? "

" I listen, your high nobility," said he.

" And I am not 'your high nobility' any more," I said.

Grigorie's face fell. It was as if his beloved master had been reduced in rank.

" Do you understand, Little Pigeon ? " said I.

" I listen, your——"

" 'Mr. Commander,' " I prompted.

" Mr. Commander," said he, nervously.

This afternoon he brought me tea.

" Tea, your high nobility," he said. Then, " I beg your pardon—tea, Mr. Commander."

" Damn it ! " said I, hurt, " you don't need to beg my pardon ! "

" Precisely so . . . I listen. . . . I understand. . . . Precisely so, your high nobility," said he.

Custom dies hard. Some day this great big simple orderly of mine will learn the freedom that is now his right. A day will come when Grigorie will say " Your high nobility" no more. But gratefully I know that I shall always be a noble in his heart, and I am proud of my clean domain. . . .

CHAPTER XVI

GRIGORIE—THE MISER

GRIGORIE, my orderly, is a miser. He hoards his money. He keeps it in an armoured purse. Also he counts it several times each week. Perhaps he hopes that it will grow ; rather, I think, he fears that some money may fade away. Therefore he watches it with anxiousness.

As Russian soldiers go, Grigorie is rich. I can explain this thus : Firstly, Grigorie is Grigorie, and, secondly, I am I. This sentence, too, needs explanation. . . . Grigorie, although the ugliest man I know, is the best and kindest soul alive. Alas ! bad temper comes to me at times, and then I speak cross words to him. Follows remorse, and I see his eyes again—the eyes of a hurt child. I call him to me. " Little Pigeon," I say. That is all. But I hand him half a rouble—or a rouble if my words have been very bad. I do not explain the gift, but I think he understands. He beams on me, and I see forgiveness in his face—and I marvel at the cheapness of the price of peace of mind. . . . So, as soldiers go, Grigorie is rich. Otherwise, certainly, one cannot save on wages just a little more than a halfpenny per day.

Grigorie counts his money in the safety of my room.

" Excuse me, Mr. Commander," he says, and he fumbles in his trouser pocket for his purse.

This pocket is big and deep. The purse lies at the foot. The top of it is a cloth bag of *machorka*—chopped-up tobacco-root such as the Russian soldiers like to smoke. Other articles, too, are there—a knife, a piece of string, some crumpled letters. And on top of all is

a crushed-up piece of newspaper that Grigorie wedges in tightly so that it forms a sort of lid. All these—the paper and the letters and the string and knife and small cloth bag have to be removed before the armoured purse is reached. Leather and large, this purse, and bound with steel. Grigorie opens it. Another purse is then exposed. He takes this out. In it is still a third. Then comes a little packet wrapped in cloth. And then a packet wrapped in newspaper. . . . Then Grigorie feasts his eyes upon his rouble notes. Each one is folded separately. Each one is opened and smoothed out. He spreads them on the little table in the corner of my room. I hear him muttering : “ Rouble . . . ten kopecks . . . and ten . . . ten and ten ”—hesitatingly —“ twenty . . . rouble twenty . . . three roubles. . . . ” I must have told him to go to the devil on that occasion—“ Four roubles twenty. . . . ” and so on.

He folds the notes up carefully, wraps them in paper, then in cloth ; then in the purse, and in the purse, and in the other purse. To the depths of his trouser pocket once again—with bag and knife and string and letters and crushed-up newspaper on top. He pats his leg to feel that his wealth is there. He prepares to leave the room. This is the moment for me to speak.

“ How much, Grigorie ? ” I ask.

“ Twenty-eight roubles, twenty-four kopecks, Mr. Commander ! ” he answers joyfully. That was last week—ten days ago.

“ My God ! ” I say—these words are quite nice in Russian—“ but you are rich ! ”

“ Precisely so, Mr. Commander. Glory be to God, rich ! ”

And he grins toothlessly, and his eyes all but disappear.

Two days later he came to me and begged my help. He has a wife and babies in Siberia—God knows how many hundred versts away. He writes long letters every week. But now he had a wonderful surprise in store. Twenty-five roubles, to be exact. And to send these by post, he asked me to assist. . . . The money went that day, and in the evening he added up the notes that still remained.

"How much, Grigorie?" I asked as usual.

"Three roubles, Mr. Commander. . . . Three roubles fourteen kopecks."

"You've been playing cards!" said I severely.

"I am not able to understand," Grigorie said gravely.

"I remember," said I, "you had twenty-eight roubles, twenty-four kopecks. To-day you've sent twenty-five away. You ought to have three roubles twenty-four."

Grigorie confessed to extravagance. He had bought some cigarettes from the little army shop.

II

That was eight days ago. I felt very pleased with Grigorie, and so I have not been irritable with him since. And so, as pay-day is still two weeks off, no further money is in that five-fold purse.

To-day I saw the following: Grigorie was chopping wood beside my dug-out door. He had a cigarette in his mouth—a clumsy cigarette made of *machorka* wrapped in a piece of newspaper. Incidentally, he was wearing woollen gloves; also he wields his axe left-handedly. . . . Another soldier walked along our way. A tired soldier with a bulky knapsack on his back.

"Good day," said he.

"Good day," said Grigorie, continuing to cut up wood.

The man stopped. Grigorie chopped. And then my orderly looked up. He gave a little cry, dropped his axe, pulled off his woollen gloves, shook hands excitedly—and the two fell into each other's arms and kissed. Then they sat on the wood pile, and Grigorie made a cigarette for his friend—and they smoked and talked for half an hour. Grigorie could not see me, but from my window—level with the ground—I could see him. His face was wonderful.

At last the other rose to go. And then Grigorie did a most unusual thing. He removed the paper lid from his pocket. And he removed the articles that fortified his purse. And he opened his purse out there—not in the secret safety of my room—and thrust a rouble into his fellow-soldier's hand. Then they grasped hands once again, and kissed, and the soldier went away and

Grigorie watched him go, then lit his cigarette and chopped up one or two more logs.

When Grigorie came to my room with an armful of firewood, he looked very excited. Of course I understood.

"Tell me all about it, Little Pigeon," said I.

"My *zemlak*, Mr. Commander! . . . My *zemlak*!"

So the two men were from the same wee village in Siberia. . . .

"We left for war together, Mr. Commander, and we only met again to-day."

"And did he know that you were here?"

"Not so, no, Mr. Commander," said Grigorie. "I was chopping wood. I heard a man say 'Good day.' I said 'Good day' but I did not even look"—and he told me all about the incident I had seen. But not a word about the rouble. . . .

"Grigorie, Little Pigeon," said I, "I saw your *zemlak*. . . . And you gave him a rouble?"

Poor Grigorie was confused. He stammered nervously.

"My fellow-villager, Mr. Commander," he said in his thin voice. "He is poor, Mr. Commander. . . . And he has little children, too. . . . His children and mine play together, Mr. Commander. . . . And he does not have white bread. . . . You are a very kind man, Mr. Commander, so sometimes I have white bread. . . ." He paused, unable to proceed. Then, nervously, "I gave him a present, Mr. Commander. . . . He was very happy."

"And you were happy, too, Little Pigeon?" said I.

"Precisely so, Mr. Commander. . . . I was very happy."

"I, too, am very happy, Grigorie," said I. "I want to be still more happy," I added, "so I will give you this. . . . It is my present."

I handed him a five-rouble note.

"If another *zemlak* comes along, and if you give him that," I said—and all of a sudden I found that tears had welled up in my eyes—"you will be the ruin of me, my dear."

CHAPTER XVII

HIS EXCELLENCE

IN the morning, the General, Chief of Staff, walked in the grounds of the mansion where he lived. There was a splendid sun. The snowy garden glistened in its light. Up in the sky were German aeroplanes. One scarce could see them. Only a distant hum, as of a motor-car very far away, the Russian guns and little shrapnel clouds told one that enemy machines were there. When one looked up one's eyes were dazzled with the sun. The aeroplane observers must have found the shining fields most difficult to spy.

The General walked as far as the big iron gate. The guard stood stiffly at salute, their eyes fixed on the Chief, Andrei and Gregory, giants of men, grey-coated, the red armlet of the army police upon their sleeves.

"Good health, brothers," the General said.

A moment's pause, and then the answering shout:

"We wish you health, Your Excellency!"

The General smiled and signalled with his hand that they could stand at ease, and then he walked away again—slowly along the trampled garden path.

A young staff officer came down the mansion steps. He saluted, and standing thus he spoke a few words to his chief. The General went with him to the house. And then he worked until the mid-day meal.

In the afternoon he lay down in his room to rest. He had been early up that day. He had been late the night before. He slept—and never woke again. They found him with a peaceful smile on his calm face. Death came—not as he himself had wished, but as we would have wished for him.

Four regiments were told the news by telephone. A wire was sent to Petrograd.

II

Behind our lines a wide snow-levelled plain specked with black dots of bushes, only the tops of which were seen. A few dug-outs, a peasant's hut or two where soldiers lived, patches of firs, snow-laden. Hard beaten tracks that led from point to point, with pine branches stuck in the ground to guide one's way. Single lines of field telephone wire that further helped to show direction. Sledges in ones and twos and strings of eight and ten glided all day across the woods. Firewood, and bread, and hay, and timber for new trench supports—the loads were varied. Heavy wheeled carts from time to time crunched past with a curious metallic sound, as of the jingling of sleigh bells, as the wheels went over the frozen ground. Men on horseback—men on foot, bending their weight against the wind.

A row of pines, and, just beyond, a disused factory. A Red Cross flag flew from the roof. The place was now a lazaret. A cross above a cellar door with "Church" painted in great black letters by the side. Two steps that led down from the level ground into a damp earth-floored room. The walls were of rough tree trunks. Some fir branches were placed to hide the crudeness of the unplanned beams. The low ceiling had once been white-washed; now it was a dirty grey. At the eastern end an unpainted partition. Cheap gaudy-coloured pictures of the saints were fastened there with drawing pins. Behind this wooden screen there was a simple altar.

The church was three miles from the firing line. Inside, it might have been a thousand versts away. In the very crudeness of it—the simplicity—there was something wonderfully impressive. One thought of Moscow and of Petrograd—of the great churches there with all their wealth of ornament—paintings by great masters; gold work and jewels; wonderful carvings and tapestries. Memories of Bible lessons of another year. . . . "*Where one or two are gathered together in My Name. . . . there will I be in the midst of them. . . .*"

I have been in Russian chapels less than two hundred paces from our front trench and heard a service while the shells screamed overhead. One feels quite safe, no matter how the shrapnels whistle. . . .

Night-time, and "projectors" lighting up the battle lines, and rockets rising up above the barbed-wired space between. Artillery and machine-gun fire; rifle volleys—single shots—the huge crash and earthquake of a sprung mine. The whistle of a sentry now and then—the sign for some strange passer-by to stop. A jingle of bells from a sledge. Sometimes the singing of a company of men.

The dead General, dressed in full uniform, his sword and cap upon his breast, lay in a metal casket in the church. A guard of soldiers, great-coated but bare of head, stood by the corners of the coffin. It was gloomy and cold and damp in the converted cellar. A tiny candle before an ikon supplied the only light. It flickered in the draught, causing queer shadows to come and go around the walls and on the ceiling. The Holy Mother's face seemed to smile—and then to disappear. . . .

III

The morning when the Mass was held was dull and grey. We drove or rode across the levelled plain towards the cellar church. Sledges with two horses— abreast or running tandem-wise. Sledges with teams of three to pull them, the outer horses plunging in the drifts by the road's edge. Officers on horseback, too—and all of us so muffled up one could not tell our rank. Woolly caps that came down round our neck and ears; hoods of warm camel wool; mufflers round our jaws—only our eyes were to be seen.

We lined up in the little church. The divisional commander was there—and the General in charge of the Army Corps. A soldier gave us thin brown candles and lit them with the one he held himself. The army priest chanted the service in a deep bass voice.

There was a woman there. She knelt by the coffin's

edge, clutching at it with feverish, white, ringless fingers, and crying broken-heartedly to the dead. . . .

"My love! . . . My love! . . . Oh! my soul. . . . My dear soul!"

A staff officer stood at her left hand side; a regimental doctor at the right. Behind him was a sanitari, white-overalled, with a small bottle and a pad of cotton-wool. . . .

The priest chanted a prayer. An immense censer perfumed the air as it swung on its silver chain.

"Oh! My God! . . . My God!" the woman cried. Her sobs were pitiful.

There was a choir of soldiers in the altar space. They sang softly while we all knelt upon the damp earth floor.

"Oh! Christ, give peace with the saints to the soul of Thy servant. . . . There is no sadness nor sorrow nor suffering there. . . . but only Life Everlasting. . . ."

The woman screamed hysterically.

"Now, now," the priest said to her. "Calm. . . . Be calm. . . . Calmly"—and he held his silver cross to her lips so that she could kiss it.

Then very softly came the final chant:

"Vechnaya Pamiat. . . . Vechnaya Pamiat. . . . Vechnaya Pamiat. . . ."

"Remember eternally"—the words were sung slowly three times.

We rose and straightened ourselves, then filed out into the open air.

IV

A thousand soldiers lined one side of the curving approach to the church—from opposite the door to where the track cut straight across the plain towards the railway line ten miles away. A grey wall of a thousand men—spiked with a thousand bayonets. A respirator in a green tin box hung at each man's side. A military band stood in square form. We took our place in front of it and waited bare of head. There was a bitter wind. The bandsmen warmed their fingers with their breath.

Two men in yellow robes came from the church. One held aloft an image of Christ upon the Cross; the other

carried a banner with a pictured saint. Then came a third bearing a cushion in his hands on which lay the medals and decorations of the General's career. The priest came next, and then eight officers carried out the body of their former chief. They had some difficulty at the low narrow door. . . .

The Colonel, mounted on his white horse, shouted a command. The battalion of men that lined the road presented arms, and fixed their eyes upon the metal box. The band played a hymn softly. The screams of the woman rose above all. The staff officer and the doctor supported her at each side.

A field gun—a grim, green-painted gun—drawn by a steaming team of eight, stood ready for its load. The rough wooden platform above the four-inch barrel looked very crude beneath the ornamental coffin. The ropes, too, did not harmonise. The horses strained in their traces, the wheels crunched on the frozen snow, and the journey to the train began. A little brown horse, well rugged against the cold, went first behind the military hearse. Then came the woman, still stretching out her ringless hands; the generals and younger officers; the band, still playing its soft tune, drums rolling out a muffled moan. Four soldiers left the wall of men—then other four—and thus until the whole battalion swung into place in the procession. A battery of guns was drawn up at the corner of the road, where it branched off across the great white plain. The officers and men stood at the salute.

We walked a verst and then we got into the sledges that had followed us and rode instead. The priest and the men in yellow robes returned towards the church, their thin robes flopping in the cutting wind. The band ceased to play. We quickened our pace.

Passing soldiers doffed their caps and crossed themselves. . . .

V

Evening, and a glorious sky—the dullness of the day all gone. The west horizon salmon pink above the setting sun. Long, narrow, damson-coloured clouds all

lined with gold. The snow a yellow-rosy tint with long thin bars of lavender where shadows fell from dark green pines and tops of tiny shrubs. Towards the east a sky of quite another hue—the colour we call “plum.” The pinkness changed to cinnamon ; the snow to various shades of grey with queer wind-blown wrinkles on the plain, and broad flat waves such as one sees at low tide on the sand. Curious patches of white, also, where men had trod or where a dog had passed across. A haze, the colour of tobacco smoke, hung veil-like over the distant west.

Then stars came tumbling out, blinking as though awakening from sleep. There was a moon—a full round moon as yet not fully lit. Pale and whitish, it seemed a phantom of its yellow self. A hush lay over all the land. Then suddenly a rocket rose above the facing lines ; and then another ; and a searchlight swung round on a trial course. Flashes of guns came in the sky like wild-fire ; one does not notice them by day.

The General, new Chief of Staff, drove homeward through the snow. He had had a busy day. There was the service in the little church, and then the slow ride to the railway line. There were regimental staffs to visit after that. The *troika* horses raced along, nostrils smoking, sides steaming in the frosty air. They climbed the hill towards the staff quarters at walking pace, heads down, for they were tired. They turned slowly to enter through the gate.

The guard stood stiffly at attention. Andrei and Gregory, giants of men, were on evening duty at their post.

“ Good health, brothers,” the General, Chief of Staff, said. He was glad to see the warm lights of the mansion windows.

A moment’s pause, and then the answering shout :
“ We wish you health, Your Excellence ! ” . . .

CHAPTER XVIII

“WEATHER PERMITTING . . .”

WHEN I was in Petrograd in the beginning of January, 1917, I had dinner one evening with a retired Russian Admiral, who at one time had been in command of the Russian ships in the Danube and in that part of the Black Sea into which the river runs. We discussed the evacuation of the Dobruja. I told him of our movements there. Of course, he knew the country perfectly. I was enthusiastic about the Danube as a natural barrier to check the enemy's progress. The river was wide and deep and swift. Also the Dobruja side opposite Braila, Galatz, Reni and Ismail was low. An enemy could not approach under cover. He could place pontoon boats only with great difficulty and at a very heavy cost. I ventured the opinion that the river from Braila downwards would not be crossed.

“The matter lies with God,” said the Admiral. I did not quite understand. “With God?” I asked.

“Yes,” he replied, “with God. . . . If the river is frozen the enemy can easily cross.”

“But,” said I, “it was as mild as an English spring when I was there last month, and I was told that for at least two years the Dobruja has been entirely free from snow.”

The Admiral then told me that he remembered many winters in the past when the lower Danube was frozen; when an army could easily have passed across the ice, men and horses, and artillery as well. That it was so mild in the winter 1916–1917 was pure luck, for on other parts of the Russian Front, and, indeed, throughout the greater part of Europe, the winter had been the coldest

and the most severe for many years. When I reached the Baranovitchi Front some days later, I found the weather conditions quite arctic. The winter of 1915-1916, which I had spent a little to the north, had been comparatively mild. This following winter, further south and at a similar altitude, found us shivering in twenty-five degrees of frost. It was the most severe winter the district had had for a long period of years. As a rule, I was told by men who knew that part of the country well, sledges were not necessary.

The weather is a most important factor in the war. Germans and Russians and weather—the last sometimes friendly, sometimes against us, more seldom neutral. Considering the fact that we did no attacking, the worse the weather was the better it was for us. The Russian soldier is a sort of Thermos man. He can stand great heat and great cold with equal ease. The heaviest storms of rain may drench his body and flood his sleeping quarters, but they cannot even damp his spirits. No other soldiers can endure the same climatic privations as the Russians can. Certainly not the Germans. A storm of snow or rain or wind meant freedom from the enemy's attacks. If we accepted invitations to visit other camps for dinner or for supper, we used to say in 1915, "Germans permitting." After the great retreat came to an end, we used to say, "Weather permitting." And the weather that allowed us to leave our posts and ride or drive to visit other officers was bad weather. The worse it was the greater our peace of mind.

Clear days of sun brought aeroplanes and bombs. If one had to go on duty across the plains, such days were very bad. Certainly no bombs fell in the open spaces far away from camps and villages and railway points, but our own anti-aircraft shrapnel did—our own shrapnel bullets and shrapnel heads and pieces of shrapnel shell. These were worse than the bombs themselves, because they were in much greater numbers and we had absolutely no shelter. Sometimes our own men were killed by Russian shrapnel, whereas the bombs would often fall and injure not a single man. The worst weather of all, from our point of view, was a slow wind from the west. Then we might be attacked with gas. We were always warned when a favourable

time for enemy gas shells came. A telephoned notice would come from the Divisional Staff to say that the weather was suitable for an enemy gas attack. Then we were supposed to see to the readiness of our masks and those of our men, and not to venture out without our respirators with us. True, we often went afield without our masks, but they were always at hand in our sleeping quarters. They hung beside our beds within reach. . . . We used to joke about the warnings. A telephonist would come to our quarters.

"Gas attack?" we would ask.

"Precisely so. Gas attack," he would answer.

"Very glad," we would say. And no one thought any more about the matter.

One morning, at two o'clock, when I was sound asleep, the telephonist woke me up to give me a telephogram. It was, as I might have said had he come by day, the announcement of "favourable weather for enemy gas attack!" I drove the man from me in annoyance. But first I told him that he need not trouble to inform me about the weather, as my mask and those of my men were always at hand, and that my men never went out without the green tin boxes that held their respirators slung to their shoulders. They were part of the uniform. It would be a case of "Wolf! Wolf!" I told him—and had to explain that fable. . . . Two days later, on March 26, there was an enemy gas attack, and I had not been warned. . . .

When a gas attack took place at night signal torches were lit at once. A line of these extended from the trenches to a point some versts behind. Tall poles with straw wrapped round them and with a bundle of straw tied on top. This straw was drenched with paraffin and set alight. When the soldier in charge of the second beacon saw the first one blaze, he lit his; the third man saw the second flare and lit his—and in a few minutes the news had blazed across all the battle area.

So good weather was bad, and bad weather was good. We certainly had all sorts. The first warm days of spring were very pleasant. We left off our overcoats and we used to sit in the open air. We walked about the camp without our caps and our minds turned to cool tents and to open air dining tables. Then suddenly,

on April 18, we had a storm of snow. Next day found the marshes frozen. It was bitterly cold. Snow fell and then hail, and a cutting wind blew. The first week of May brought a gale that bent and broke the trees and made the doors and windows rattle. But then we slept in peace, secure in our knowledge that our gas masks would not be required. The second week in May brought hot summer days and clouds of dust upon the tracks. Then came a thunderstorm—thunder and lightning and torrents of rain. My dug-out was flooded. The sun had cracked the clay that formed the top layer of the roof. The rain passed through this and poured upon me as I lay in bed. . . .

For weeks after my return to the Russian Front all was calm. There was a certain amount of social life. The Staffs had to be visited and there were dinner and supper parties in the various regimental messes. Officers would visit me, too, when we drank tea and smoked cigarettes and talked of England. All were very much interested in England. I had to answer many questions. Being the only "foreigner" on that part, I received much hospitality and I had so many visitors each week that I was able to act as host in return. Which was magnificent—but not like war. . . . Then, out of a clear sky, came an enemy attack. The weather had gone to the side of the Germans.

On the 26th of March, at three o'clock in the afternoon, the enemy attacked with gas shells. His aeroplanes had been scouting over our lines all forenoon, dropping a smoke ball now and then or else a red paper balloon. Our guns brought down two enemy machines. Later on two of our observation balloons were set on fire and destroyed by German aeroplane bombs. The enemy artillery kept up a steady heavy bombardment for about five hours. High explosive shells were used as well as those that discharged gas. Four times the German infantry attacked. The first three times they were repulsed with heavy losses. At the fourth attempt they managed to gain possession of a small section of the Russian lines, less than two versts in length.

At this time I was in command of the chief transport in the division that was attacked, so we had much work

to do. I also had an oxygen station near the trenches. Here we made oxygen gas. We had two hundred large cushions filled with oxygen when the attack started. The four regiments in the division had also received a supply of these cushions from us some time before, but we continued to send oxygen to the aid of the gassed men. I and my assistants worked for sixty hours at a stretch without any sleep or rest. As soon as the cushions we gave were empty, they were brought back to us and we filled them again. In all we made over three hundred cushions in the three nights that we worked, and we transported many men to the various lazarets and field hospitals further back.

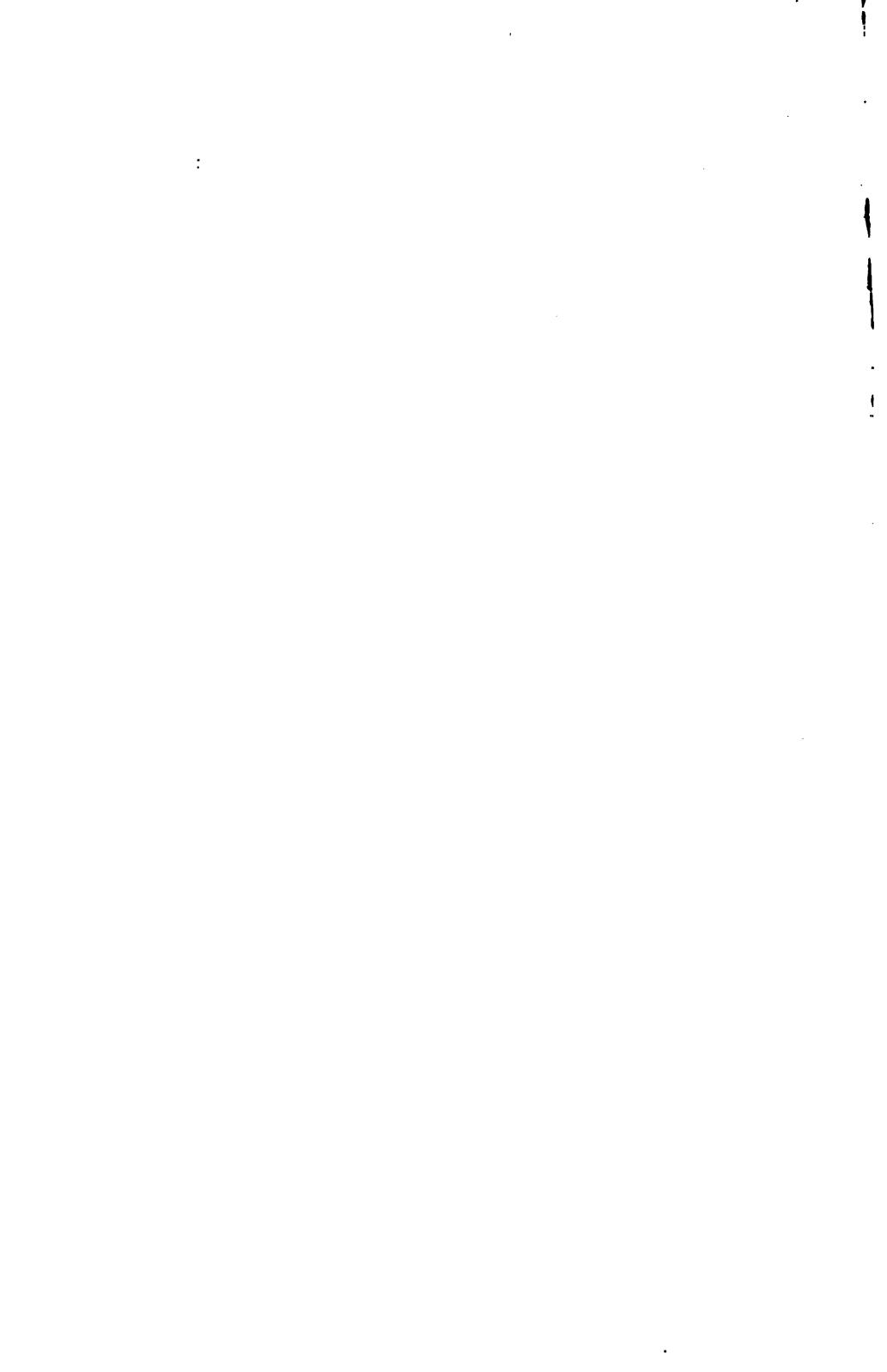
The L—— regiment suffered most. This regiment was one of the finest in the Russian Army and one of the bravest. Almost every officer had received the St. George's Cross for his bravery. This is the highest award in Russia. Some had English decorations, too—the Military Cross and the D.S.O. Every officer had been wounded at least once. Several had been wounded four times, and one (he had the Military Cross) had been wounded on six different occasions. The Commander had been wounded twice. . . .

Poor L—— regiment! . . . Splendid and heroic as it was, it was also one of the most unfortunate. Few regiments in this war have suffered as it has done. When I wrote my book, "On the Russian Front," I mentioned that each Russian regiment in time of war is composed of 4,000 men, but that one Russian regiment of which I know, after a year of war had already had 88,000 men in its ranks. I wrote then, "Can I write anything more tragic than that?" . . . A Lieutenant-Colonel of the L—— Regiment assured me in February of 1917 that his regiment had had more than 50,000 men in its ranks since war began, and this including the year 1916 when matters were comparatively quiet on the Russian Front, when the war to a certain extent was at a standstill. . . . There were rumours after this gas attack that the L—— Regiment would go into the reserve, but that did not happen. The regiment was filled up again like a depleted oxygen cushion and, as I write, still remains at the Front.

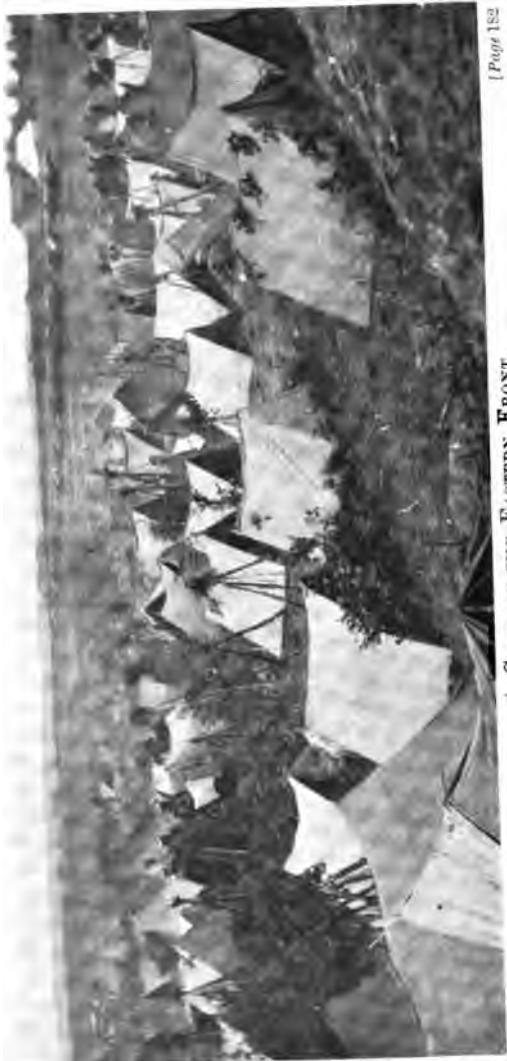
The third week in May brought days of great heat and

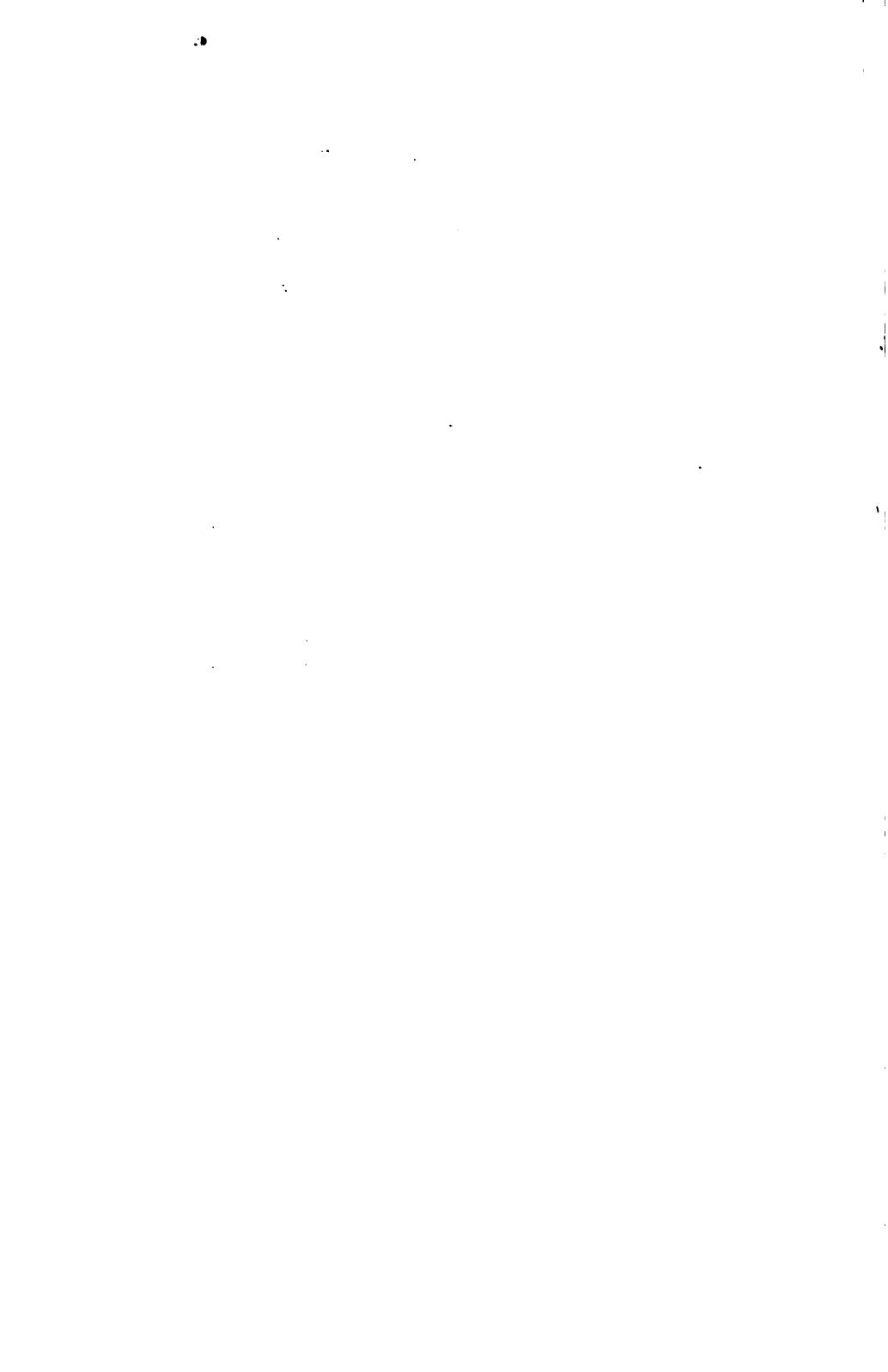
ENGLISH SOLDIERS OF THE R.N.A.S.





A CAMP ON THE EASTERN FRONT.





close sultry nights. It was the fire season. On the 22nd I saw three villages in flames. On the 25th I counted five different fires. Great clouds of smoke rose on the horizon. The dry weather, the wooden cottages with the thatched roofs, and careless soldiers—that was the combination that was to blame. A divisional order of May 25 warned the men of the necessity of being specially careful. This order followed on a week of daily village fires. On May 26 I rode past a burnt-out village. Only a few bricks and a few stone stoves remained. The entire village—houses and sheds and gates and even the woodwork at the top of the wells had been destroyed. The light ashes had been scattered with the wind so that the site of the village was remarkably tidy. Nearby were newly-made dug-outs in which the homeless soldiers and peasants had already taken up their abode.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FAMINE IN RUSSIA

OF the Russian Revolution and of the coming of the Republic and of how the new régime affected us at the Front, I will write in another chapter. In Russia there was an undercurrent of discontent that only occasionally ruffled the surface of the people's life. The Germanophile Ministry—the "German Ministry" the Russian newspapers called it later on—and the fears that intelligent people had of the signing of a separate peace were political questions that the greater mass of Russians did not understand. There was a more vital, immediate matter that they all knew of, because on account of it they all suffered—the matter of the food supply.

Russia—this great Russia that could feed the world! —was short of food; and very short of other commodities too. When I was in Odessa, the greatest wheat port in the south of Europe, there were days when no bread could be had. When I was in Kiev, the sugar city of "Little Russia" and one of the most important sugar cities on the continent, there were queues of people from two to four hundred deep waiting to secure a daily allowance of a few ounces of sugar. When I was in Tiflis, the aeroplane ground there was closed for lack of petrol—and Baku was on the direct railway line less than a day's journey away. . . . There was a scarcity of everything in Russia—food and clothes and boots and petrol and paraffin. What things there were were very dear. Prices were abnormally high. I do not write of shops in little towns near the zone of fire, where

one paid eight shillings for a small tin of ordinary biscuits weighing just over a pound and a half, and seven shillings and sixpence for a small box of very ordinary (and very stale) bon-bons. . . . I write of shops in towns far from the battle line.

In December, 1916, I paid two shillings in a Petrograd shop for a tiny note-book such as one could buy on Ludgate Hill for twopence. I paid nearly four shillings for a cake of Pears' soap ! In the Crimea, in the early days of 1917, a tiny chicken cost seven roubles fifty kopecks—more than ten shillings. I suggested at the time I heard of this that the bird was a cross between a hen and a guinea-fowl. . . . In Moscow, in February of the same year, ordinary "cheap" sausage cost five shillings a pound (the Russian pound is only 14½ ounces) and a pound of ham cost six shillings. Sugar, tea, flour, meat and potatoes could scarcely be obtained in Moscow at this time.

Boots in Petrograd cost anything from five guineas a pair upwards. Clothes were simply impossibly dear. I know of a man (above military age, be it noted !) who went to buy a light overcoat in the summer of 1916. The price asked was £25. . . . This man also wanted a suit—morning coat and vest and trousers. The price asked was £80. He then said that he would have an ordinary lounge suit instead. The price of that, said the tailor, would be £28. So my friend left in disgust. Afterwards he assured me that he would buy no more clothes until the war was over, even if he had to wear his dress suit during the day !

I know, too, of a Petrograd lady who wished to buy a winter coat for her daughter, a young lady of nineteen. She went to a ladies' tailor in town. A woman assistant showed her a coat that was priced at a thousand roubles. Before the war, that sum was over a hundred pounds ; at that time it was nearly seventy pounds. The lady protested against the high price.

"Oh," said the assistant, "we can easily sell this coat at a thousand roubles. In fact, we can sell it now at twelve hundred. . . . That lady there," referring to a new arrival, "will give twelve hundred roubles with pleasure. You will see, Madame." . . .

The assistant went to the other lady, showed her the

coat, told her the price was twelve hundred roubles—and sold it at once. The coat was not a fur one. The trimmings were of fur, but of no special value.

This is an absolutely true instance. . . . Finally, this lady friend of mine secured a tweed coat, not furred, for her daughter for sixty pounds. In London, during the war, it would have cost three guineas in Oxford Street. Indeed, it would have paid anyone who required a new suit or two and new underwear and boots to have gone to London specially to buy them—provided one would take the risk of crossing the North Sea (or German ocean !) in these days of submarines.

Of other prices I need not write, except to say that they were proportionately high. "Capstan" tobacco—a cheap enough tobacco at home—cost twenty-five roubles a pound in Petrograd. That works out at exactly 2s. 1d. per ounce at the exchange then current. I mention this brand specially, because it was the English tobacco best known in Russia. "Pioneer" and "Traveller" were also to be had at the same price. These three kinds seemed to have a monopoly. But tobacco is a luxury and its price is unimportant (except, alas ! to us who smoke !); I mention it, however, to show how very dear things were, and because it specially came under my own notice.

The trouble was that people paid these ridiculous prices, many of which had been forced up by the greed of the shopkeepers. Some people were very rich—who had never been rich before. . . . Incidentally, jewellers never did such good business as they did then. . . . Shopkeepers, in consequence of the shortage of supply and of the greatness of demand, became impertinently independent. In Kiev, for instance, some shops closed their doors for several hours each afternoon, only opening them again when the owners felt inclined. One would enter such a shop and ask for such and such a thing. Then one would grumble at the price. The shopkeeper would remark insolently, "You needn't have it if you don't want it !" for he knew that other people would willingly pay the price he asked. There was a corner of everything in Russia; and this cornering of supplies was not the work of one man but the collaboration of all, or nearly all, the shopkeepers.

True, the Government fixed the prices of many things, but this did not help matters at all. Shopkeepers simply said that they had none, when one asked for fixed-price articles. They knew that sooner or later one would have to pay their price.

The scarcity of meat was to be expected. It can be easily explained. First, there were millions of Russian peasants who had been called to the colours. These peasants, in times of peace, hardly knew what it was to eat meat. Only twice a year—at Christmas and at Easter—did they have feasts when meat was served. Potatoes and *kasha* and cabbage and other vegetables, with black bread, were their sole fare. But in the army each man got three-quarters of a pound of meat daily. In the first year of war the allowance was a pound a day; later on this was reduced to three-quarters of a pound, and now, as I write, to half a pound daily. Thus every day at least five or six million pounds of meat were needed that had not been needed before. True, there were giant herds of cattle in Siberia, but the Trans-Siberian line was fetching ammunition and army material from Vladivostok; the line was working practically entirely for the army. True, there were giant flocks of sheep in the Caucasus, but the railway lines there had all the traffic they could handle in the way of men and guns and munitions and army stores for the regiments on the Caucasian Front.

And there are other facts to be considered. The supply of fish was shortened. One can only blame the lack of railway transport for this. On the shores of the Caspian there were places called “Fish cemeteries”—where thousands of tons of fish rotted in the absence of wagons to take the supplies to the towns. The army also ate much fish each week, and the Baltic certainly gave less than it had given in the past.

Then there were the refugees. There are millions of them in Russia. I cannot write “thousands”; the number was literally millions. Folks from Poland and White Russia and Galicia and the Baltic Provinces and, later, Roumania. Petrograd and Moscow and Kiev were full of Polish folk, many of whom were well-to-do. Odessa was filled with families who had fled from

Roumania. These all made demands on the nation's meat supply. The population of Moscow was much greater than it had ever been. One could scarcely find a room in any hotel or lodging-house. The same applies to towns like Petrograd and Kiev and Odessa. In the first, indeed, people who wanted flats advertised in the newspapers offering to pay several hundred roubles to anyone who would tell them of a vacant *logement*. That may sound incredible ; it is absolute truth. And it is significant of the state of things that existed that it was only by such means that one could get what one wanted. This, also, applied to the hotels. In April of 1916 I was in Petrograd for a couple of days. I tried to get a room in six different hotels, but without success.

"Have you tried tipping the head porter ?" an Englishman I know asked, on my lamenting to him.

"No," said I. "I will tip him later."

"Oh !" said he, "There will be no 'later' if you do not tip him first as well."

"How much ?" I asked.

"That depends," said he. "Five roubles—ten roubles if you want to make quite sure."

So I returned to a hotel at which I had been assured there was not a room to be had.

"I want a room," I said to the head porter, and I gave him a ten-rouble note.

"At once, sir," said he, taking off his hat to acknowledge my bribe. "At once"—and he told another man to take my luggage up to room No. —.

A friend of mind paid ten roubles to the porter at the Hotel Metropole in Moscow in order to secure a room, but even higher tips have had to be given.

All this is by the way. To continue—

There was yet another governing factor in the scarcity of meat. This was the prohibition of the sale of vodka. This caused a remarkable wave of prosperity amongst the working people and the peasant classes who had not gone to war. They could buy meat, who had never bought much meat before. From memory I cannot quote the exact figures, but in the Russian finance statements in the *Times* Russian supplements, the savings of the people, judged by their deposits in the Russian savings banks had increased by millions of roubles per month.

Again, I must write in millions. The learned critic of the *Times* who reviewed my earlier book, "On the Russian Front," accused me—perhaps not unkindly—of making my unit a thousand. May I answer him now? . . . How can I write of Russia otherwise? The land is enormous; millions of acres does not express it. The army is a ten-million one. The distances are reckoned in thousands of versts. The battle front is a thousand miles, and more, in length. The refugees numbered millions; so did the Russian losses. . . . General Brusilov makes an advance in Galicia. He takes 800,000 men prisoners; the dead and wounded numbered thousands also. The war costs sixty to eighty million roubles every day. The army consumes many hundred million pounds of food daily. And ammunition—but when writing of the tragic year, 1915, my unit of shells was only one. . . .

So, then, there was the army to be fed with meat; there were the increased populations of the towns; there was the lack of railway transport facilities; and there was the increased prosperity which turned the folks from vegetables to thoughts of meat. I do not know exactly, but I fancy that the potato crop was very much decreased. It must have been. The women and old men left on the land could not till it as the absent men had done. Very much territory, too, was in German hands or was so near the Russian lines that it could not be cultivated. This shortage of potatoes made some substitute necessary. The savings from the vodka that one did not buy made the purchase of meat, even expensive meat, possible. In all the towns folks lined up before the meat shops in the early hours of the morning—some even went at midnight!—in order to receive their allotted portion of meat on such days as it was legal to purchase meat. Failure to line up early meant failure to get any at all.

The question of wheat is different. True, less wheat was grown than had been before the war, but the great exports had ceased, so that the net result was that Russia had more wheat for herself than she needed. This in spite of the influx of the refugees; spite of the land the enemy occupied. The trouble in the case of

wheat was lack of transport. The railways were otherwise occupied, and much grain was left to rot because it could not be taken away in the absence of railway wagons. But bad management and disorganisation were also much to blame. Sugar, too, was doubtless produced in lesser quantities than in pre-war times. The sugar beet was cultivated less extensively. But, again, the great exports of sugar, too, had ceased. The army had enough. At first each man received five pounds per month ; later this ration was reduced to three and a half pounds. In the towns the sugar shortage was acute. Sugar tickets were issued. Folks had to wait for hours in a queue before they could be served. Visitors in hotels had to fill up a form to enable the manager to receive sugar for them. Yet there must have been sugar in the land. Railway transport, bad management and disorganisation, and certainly the greed of merchants and retailers were to blame. . . . There seemed to be no diminution in the quantity of confectionery manufactured by the great Moscow firms of Siou, Abrikosov and Einem. I do not like to think that the sweetening was entirely chemical. . . . When I was on my way to Tiflis in the late summer of 1916, I had to pass a day in Rostov-on-Don, a large and important town and railway junction (really the railway key to Asiatic Russia). There was no sugar in the cafés. In the large station buffet I ordered tea. The waiter brought me a glass of tea and a couple of caramels wrapped in paper ! At every other station on the journey from Rostov I had sweets given me in place of sugar when I ordered tea or coffee. These were a very poor substitute. When one put them in one's glass they immediately stuck to the foot and, personally, I never once was able to get them wholly dissolved before the signal bell for the train's departure rang. A Russian officer advised me of a better method than the placing of the caramels in the tea. This was to put the caramel or other sweet in one's mouth at once, chew it for a moment—then drink a mouthful of tea ; chew again—then more tea ; and so on. The substitution of these sweets was poor. Acid drops and peppermint flavoured sweets did not harmonise very well with tea or coffee. . . . Muir and Merrieles, a huge Anglo-Russian store in Moscow—the

Harrod's of the town—had a restaurant café which was always crowded. Perhaps because the serving girls were young and pretty. . . . In January of 1917 I passed through Moscow. I had tea in Muir & Merrieles' buffet. The sugar allowance for each customer was cunningly served in a small shaped salt-cellar such as one associates with the name of "Cerebos." To shake sugar into one's glass was a slow matter. In consequence of this most customers did not use all of their allotted portion. . . . The others simply unscrewed the top and poured in the whole allowance at once. I may also mention that I saw one very nicely dressed lady who did not eat the bread given to her with a plate of cold ham that she had ordered, but calmly wrapped it up in a piece of paper and took it away with her. . . .

In the case of boots, the needs of the army is the explanation of the shortage. Allowing two pairs of boots per man in the first two years of war, and that is a very modest estimate, the army supplied at least twenty million pairs of boots to men who did not wear leather boots before. The summer finds these Russian peasants barefooted ; the colder days of autumn and of spring see them with "Lapti," sandals made of bark and fibre ; the winter finds them shod with high-topped boots of felt, "Valenki," with no leather work at all—simply boots made of one piece of felt. With the southern and the Baltic ports entirely closed ; with Archangel and Vladivostok closed to all save army traffic, Russia had to be served by native manufacture only, and the factories had all that they could do to turn out boots for soldiers, although great supplies had also to be imported from other countries—America, chiefly. Enormous quantities of leather were required for other purposes ; the straps of rifles, the soldiers' belts, the leather cases in which sappers' picks and spades were carried, the harness and saddles for the army horses, and the many various articles of leather ware that formerly came from Austria and Germany.

Leather was very expensive. I paid a cobbler in Petrograd seventeen shillings for soling my boots, and I had to pay the same price for a thin belt. There was a price fixed for leather, but the cobbler assured me that

he had none at all, but that he might possibly be able to buy some, in which case I would have to pay ten roubles. . . .

All other commodities in Russia were dear. Before the war there had been enormous imports from Germany and Austria. These had ceased—although one found German and Austrian goods on sale in all the shops. . . . Also with Archangel and Vladivostok closed to all except Government supplies, the only method of securing other goods was by post. There were few goods wagons on the Finnish line to Sweden. The post was slow and, worse still, precarious. The Kodak Company in Petrograd in one day received nearly nine hundred limit-size parcels by post. And other firms had to receive their goods in this way. My friend, Mr. Robert Lattimore, of Petrograd, the proprietor of Watkins & Co., the English booksellers, received all his wares in post parcels. And books weigh very heavy! But his prices were the cheapest I met with in Russia. A shilling book cost a rouble. The average rate of exchange in 1916 was about fifteen roubles to the pound sterling, so that one bought in Petrograd for the equivalent of 1s. 4d. what one had to pay a shilling for in London. But Watkins and Co. were rare exceptions—the only ones of which I know.

Such bulky articles as cloth could not well come by post, so clothing was very dear. The great woollen mills of Lodz and Warsaw were in German hands (I think they had always been German!); the home factories had all they could do to turn out clothes for soldiers. The huge mill of the Thornton Woollen Mill Company in Petrograd—the largest in Russia and certainly one of the largest in the world—worked exclusively on army contracts. Enough cloth to clothe four thousand soldiers was manufactured each day. Also rugs and blankets were made in great quantities. As much of the wool came from Australia, one can imagine the difficulties involved and the necessity for an increased price.

With the opening of the new Alexandrovsk-Petrograd railway, things will certainly improve. The new port on the Murman coast will be free all the year, whereas Archangel was ice-bound for many weeks each winter.

But this railway, as I write, is just completed, and we are well in the third year of the war.

In these years, 1915 and 1916, everything in Russia was dear except—and this is the tragedy—except human life. It went cheap enough. . . .

CHAPTER XX

THE COMING OF THE REPUBLIC

THE Revolution seed had been germinating for many months. Everyone knew that from this seed would spring Rebellion—one day. Officers said, “After the War” . . . and they predicted bloody happenings. The “After the War” Rebellion would differ from all previous national risings in this respect—the army would be on the people’s side. And this would ensure success.

Of all that happened in Petrograd I do not know. I only know the main facts, and I know how we at the Front received the news. . . .

The session of the Russian Duma and of the Council of Empire was suspended on the 12th of March “until April, 1917, or later, on account of extraordinary circumstances.” On the same day several bakers’ shops in Petrograd were destroyed by the crowd. Patrols of Cossacks were in the streets (and your average Russian loves the Cossack not!). The Revolution seed had sprouted.

There was the question of the food supply. Matters had been going from bad to worse. Finally came a climax. . . . M. Milioukov, a well-known Liberal, leader of the Cadet Party, made a notable speech in the Duma criticising the insufficiency of the measures taken by the Government towards the victualling of the towns and industrial centres. He insisted upon the urgency of supplying food for the people, who were on the verge of revolt. The members of the Duma were almost unanimously on his side. Following this speech the

crowds in Petrograd and Moscow carried on manifestations in the streets. . . . The Government decided to close the Duma. On the previous evening a Council Extraordinary had been summoned by Prince Galitzine. A notable absentee was M. Protopopov, the Minister of the Interior, whose deliberate mismanagement of the food supply had brought about the crisis. The question of food was further discussed. . . . With the closing of the Duma, the workmen left their factories and fraternised with the soldiers in the streets.

Milioukov is one of the Russian statesmen whose name will have a very prominent and honourable place in history in connection with the Russian Revolution of March, 1917. It was Milioukov who fearlessly denounced Stürmer and the other traitors who so nearly sold Russia to the Germans in 1916. In November of that year Milioukov made a famous speech in the Duma. In the Russia that was, he was indeed a brave man who dared to speak against a Minister, no matter how vile the latter might be. . . . Milioukov accused Stürmer and the decadent religious *poseur*, Rasputin, of having received bribes—of being in German pay. And when he stated that Rasputin had helped towards the appointment of Stürmer as Foreign Minister (there is humour in the word "Foreign" . . .) he showed what every intelligent person in Russia knew—that Rasputin, "the head of the German spy system," was on such terms with the despicable Germanophile Empress that he was able to make and unmake Ministers. Rasputin, the lover of the Empress, was the most formidable power in Russia. . . . Stürmer went from office as the result of this speech. Rasputin was shot like a dog six weeks later. ("Assassinated" sounds bad: Rasputin's removal was an act of grace.) Russia breathed more freely. But there were other traitors still in office. The despised Empress still remained. The weak Tsar was still in charge of all the armies. There was only one thing to be done. A clean sweep of all the "Dark Forces" had to be made.

On March 14 news came to us at the Front of the crisis in Petrograd. We heard of the appointment of new Ministers. That of His Excellency Alexander

Ivanovitch Goutchkov to be Minister of National Defence was particularly interesting to us of the Second Army. Mr. Goutchkov was known to all of us as he had been in charge of the Red Cross Organisation in our army. . . . I heard the news in the dingy telegraph room of a little railway station that lay ten miles from my camp. Another officer and I had sledged across the plain to hear the news. We met men from other regiments there. We were all quite cheerful.

The abdication of the Tsar (and it was a forced abdication) took place on March 15, but the news did not reach us until Saturday, March 17. I announced to my men the coming of Michael Alexandrovitch as Emperor, in accordance with an Army Order, also that Nicolai Nicolaievitch had again been appointed Commander-in-Chief of all the Russian Armies. But on March 16 came the Republic. We got the news on Sunday, March 18, and on the 28rd we took the oath to serve under the new régime. These events all came in quick succession. No sooner had we heard of one change and discussed it than a new order came to us upsetting all the others. . . . There was absolutely no trouble. We changed from soldiers of the Tsar to soldiers of the Republic quite automatically. No one said a dissenting word. The officers all knew that such a change was bound to come : it had simply come sooner than they had expected. And the soldiers ? There was discipline in the Russian Army. They accepted the change just as they would have obeyed an order to stand at attention.

I had to make the announcements personally to my own Command, explaining simply what this new change meant. I see that scene now. . . . A huge "Zemlyanka" (earthen hut) where the men lived below the level of the ground. The floor littered with the husks of sunflower seed. A stale smell of *machorka* and my men standing in two double lines fronting each other, but with all their eyes turned on me. I told them that there was no Tsar. I told them what "Republic" meant. They punctuated my phrases with "I understand, your high nobility." . . . But their faces were expressionless. They listened and heard and accepted without emotion.

"Do you understand?" I asked.

"Precisely so. I understand, your high nobility," each man shouted.

And that was all. I went away—marvelling. The Revolution had come—and all was calm. We did not know of what little fighting there was in Petrograd. It was some weeks later before we knew of how the prisons had been set on fire—after the prisoners had been set free; of how the police had been abolished (they were sent off to serve in the army) and of how students and others now formed a militia to take the policemen's place.

I must digress for a moment to tell of what happened in Moscow. An officer friend of mine, on leave of absence, saw the incident. There was an unruly crowd. A student militia-man (he was in civilian clothes but he wore an armlet on his sleeve) was knocked down in a scuffle.

"Police!" he called, appealing to the absent powers for help. "Police! . . . Police!"

When the Staff Order came for us to take the oath to the Republic, I ordered my men to march to a little bomb-proof church near our lines. We assembled at ten o'clock at night. The earthen-floored room was damp and draughty. Flickering candles burned before the coloured pictures of the Saints. We stood before the wooden altar. The army priest, clad in his gorgeous gold-embroidered robes, read the oath word by word and we, holding up two fingers of our right hands, repeated each word after him. Then he held his Cross for the Orthodox soldiers to kiss. The men signed their names on a sheet of foolscap underneath a type-written copy of the oath. One sheet was for Orthodox soldiers, one for Catholics, one for Lithuanians, one for Mohammedans and one for Jews. The oath in each case was, with a few alterations of words, exactly the same. It was issued by Prince Lvov on March 20. The following are some of the passages:—

"I swear on my honour as an officer (soldier) and citizen, and I promise before God and my conscience to be true and unchangingly devoted to the Russian Republic as to my native land.

"I swear to serve it to the last drop of my blood, to

help with all my strength to the glory and success of the Russian Empire. . . .

"Charged with the duty of serving, I will fulfil my duties with all my power and strength, having thoughts exclusively for the advantage of the Empire, and not sparing my life for the sake of the welfare of the native land.

"I swear to obey all those established in rank above me, showing them full obedience on all occasions when my duty as an officer (soldier) and citizen is required for the native land.

"I swear to be an honest, conscientious and brave officer (soldier) and not to break my oath out of consideration for kindred, friends or foes.

"In conclusion : I have given my oath, making the sign of the Cross, and signing my name."

The Mohammedan oath said : "I conclude this, my oath, by kissing the all-glorious Koran and signing my name."

The Jew's oath omitted the words "making the sign of the Cross."

Grigorie, who is a pagan, took the oath with the Orthodox men. He stood on my left. When the priest ordered us to hold up the first two fingers of the right hand, poor Grigorie turned to me in anxiety. . . . But I assured him that it would be quite all right, so up went Grigorie's hand and I saw the poor stumps where once his first two fingers had been before the German bullet came. . . .

And then we went off—and the oath was forgotten, as I shall tell you later. . . . The next day the men wore red ribbon on their breasts. Old coloured shirts and Red Cross flags were torn up to supply the necessary material. Soldiers tied red cloth on their rifles and on their lances and on their swords. All were republican and enthusiastic. . . . They were beginning to misunderstand "Freedom." Soldiers whose medals had the ex-Tsar's head on them, turned them so that the other side was shown and the ex-Tsar's head was hidden. The "Marseillaise" was sung—with not absolutely correct notes, and with rhymeless words.

And everyone became "Comrade." The Russian soldiers used to address each other as "Zemlak"—

PRISONERS LOADING A BARGE.



"Fellow-countryman"—"Mate," indeed. But now "Zemlak" was forgotten. "Tovarish" ("Comrade") took its place.

The Red Flag hung above the soldiers' dug-outs. It hung from wagons and gun-carriages. Even the horses were decked as good republicans. The soldiers travelling by train hung out the universal flag—to the consternation of the railway men! . . . An Army Order prohibited the display by soldiers of the red flag on the railway line because of the trouble it was causing the bewildered officials! . . .

And the red flag meant danger. At first we joked about it. We called it the "Danger Sign" in jest. But soon we did not joke. The coming of Freedom on the Russian Front threatened to become a very serious affair. . . .

CHAPTER XXI

MY COMMAND—I

I BELIEVE that I am the only British subject in sole charge of a company of men on the Russian Front.

My command is very representative of the many corners of Great Russia. In my *otriad* I have Russians and "Little Russians," Armenians and Poles and Finns, a couple of Jews—one fair-haired and blue-eyed and the other with dark hair and eyes—and a Tartar, and men from far Siberia, including Grigorie, my *denschik*—my orderly—who is of Chinese countenance and who is a pagan—and the "whitest" man I know. I am their Commander, but I play other rôles as well. I am chief engineer, for instance, judge and jury, and a sort of parent to these boy-like men. They come to me for advice; they appeal to me to settle sundry matters; they show their boots and clothes and ask me if I will grant them new attire. . . . But be it noted that I am writing now of pre-revolution days before the Russian men were drunk with freedom. . . . They still come to me with requests, but we officers are no longer free. We have to grant more often than refuse. . . .

Sometimes I get letters from the men's wives, written by the professional letter-writer of their villages, begging me to send their husbands home to do some needed work in the fields. "The men have all gone," the letters say, "and I must have help to till my holding. Please, your Excellency, send Ivan Ivanov to his home." Then this is an example of other letters I have received—"I am the fiancée of Boris Borisov. I wish to be married to him. Please, your Excellency, send him home to me." The trouble was that Boris was

already wed. I told him so and pointed out the crime of bigamy. This was in April. "But now we are free, Mr. Commander!" said he. . . .

In matters of justice one has to be a Solomon. I am thinking not so much of the wisdom of Solomon as of the simplicity of his spoken judgments. . . . One has to speak as one would speak to little naughty boys. For instance a supply of new overcoats came to my command. I ordered the chief soldier—a sort of under-officer—to inspect the men and to give a new overcoat to each man whose other one was old or ragged or worn out. Three men had very good overcoats, but they asked for new ones just the same, declaring that their present coats had been bought by them personally, and paid for with their own money, and were therefore their private property. They appealed to me as the High Court, the chief soldier, as district magistrate, having refused to listen to their claims. I received them in my room. They stood awkwardly in a line in front of me, clutching their caps with nervous fingers.

"Now," said I, "tell me all."

"Your nobility!" they said in unison and proceeded to speak in chorus.

"I cannot listen to three men at once," said I.
"One of you at a time, please."

They conferred in whispers for a moment.

"Your nobility," one man said, "we bought these coats ourselves with our own money and therefore they are ours. Other soldiers get new overcoats so we would like to have new ones too. We do not want to wear out our own property."

"Where did you buy these coats?"

No answer.

"In a shop?"

No answer.

"Tell me"—severely—"where did you buy these coats?"

They conferred for a moment, then the spokesman summoned up courage and told me all. They bought them from three sick soldiers. They saw these men *en route* to hospital, on foot. They noted the goodness of their coats. They decided to purchase them. Three roubles was the price finally decided on for each—also

their old overcoats were thrown in with the money. . . . The sick men would receive new overcoats from the Red Cross authorities when the worn-out condition of their newly-exchanged coats was noted.

"And so, your nobility, the coats are ours."

"Who gave the sick men their original coats—these ones that you are wearing now?" I asked.

"They were *kazoni*—government," the men answered, again speaking in chorus.

"Ah! . . . They were *kazoni*. . . . Then they did not belong to the sick men?"

"Not so, no, your nobility," they answered.

"Now—listen—one cannot sell what does not belong to one?"

"Not so, no."

"The sick men did wrong?"

"Precisely so."

"And they are guilty?"

"Precisely so."

"But perhaps they did not ask you to buy their overcoats? Perhaps you asked them to sell them?"

"Precisely so. We asked them. Our own—"

"You asked them to sell what did not belong to them?"

"Precisely so."

"Then you did wrong, too?"

No answer.

"You gave them the idea?"

No answer.

"You made them sell what was *kazoni*. You made them like thieves?"

No answer.

"They are guilty—and you are guilty, too? True?"

"Tak tochno—precisely so, your nobility"—this somewhat doubtfully.

"Now," I continued, "I will give you each a new overcoat."

"Very much obliged, your nobility."

"And you will give the *kazoni* coats to me. I am a *kazoni* man, and if you give them to me you give them to the Government. A *kazoni* coat is always a *kazoni* coat."

"Precisely so, your nobility."

"Then the Government receives the coats which belong to it and you each receive a nice new overcoat from me."

"Precisely so, your nobility. Very much obliged." Then, "And our money, your nobility?"

"When men do wrong they are punished. True?"

"Precisely so, your nobility. Entirely true."

"They go to prison. True?"

"Precisely so, your nobility."

"But if they do not go to prison, they pay money. True?"

"Precisely so, your nobility."

"Very well. You did wrong. You will not go to prison. You will pay money instead. You have already paid three roubles each. That is your fine."

"But, your nobility, the sick men will receive new overcoats and we gave them three roubles each!"

"These three roubles," said I learnedly, "are compensation for their damaged moral character."

"We are not able to understand, your nobility," said the three men in chorus.

Which was not surprising. My logic was at fault somewhere, but not being really a Solomon I decided to end the matter there. "Nothing more," I said, and the three accomplices before the act—and during it—were thus dismissed.

Another day my men came to me with a request that they might be allowed to play cards. They did not add "for money," but I knew quite well that they wished to gamble—even on their seventy-five kopecks a month, so I refused permission. There had been fights over card games in the past, and I was anxious to preserve peace in my camp. The men went away sorrowfully. Later on a deputation arrived and assured me that the men in the trenches played cards when not on duty.

"I will speak to the Command at three o'clock," said I, and at three they were assembled.

"Attention!" shouted the chief soldier when I approached.

"Good health, brothers!"

A moment's pause. Then the answering shout, "We wish you health, your nobility!"

"Command," said I, "you wish to play cards?"

"Precisely so, your nobility"—this in unison.

"The soldiers in the trenches play cards? . . . True?"

"Precisely so, your nobility. True."

"It is allowed to play cards for money there?"

"Precisely so. It is allowed, your nobility."

"Oh, very well. I am your friend. I will do all I can for you. Unfortunately, it is not allowed to play cards here. You must go to the trenches if you want to play. I will do all I can for you. I am your friend. If each man who wishes to play cards will give his name to my secretary, I will go myself to the Staff to-morrow morning and I will arrange for him to be sent to the trenches where he can play cards when off duty. Now—give your names to-day."

No names were given, and I heard no more about the matter until some weeks after the Revolution. My judgment then was quite different. "Don't ask me," I said on the request to be allowed to play cards being renewed. And they understood that what I meant was "Do as you like—so long as I know nothing about it." That, too, is significant. . . .

And yet again, the question of the killing of a pig. . . . We had three small ones. The men thought that one might well be killed for Easter Sunday's dinner. I thought not. Big pigs were very expensive these days; it seemed a pity to slay a little one. The men did not agree. (This was also after the Revolution. Before that happened the men might not have agreed, but they would never have dared to say so.) Pork for the holiday sounded very good. Candidly, fresh pork sounded good to me, too. But when I thought of the wee porker and of my men, the words "fresh meat" sounded very small.

A deputation came to see me on the matter. The chief witness for me, thought I, is Master Pig himself. So I marched the men off with me to our stables in a corner of which the three pigs lived.

"Which one do you want?" I asked.

This was a matter that had not been decided. They wanted a pig—they did not care which. But they answered me, "That one there, Mr. Commander."

"Fetch it out into the open," said I.

They brought it out squealing. The squeal was the biggest thing about it, unless one considered the amount of dirt it had per square inch. It was a very little pig.

"How many men will be here for dinner on Easter Sunday?" I asked. The men on duty would not be present. They considered for a while, then they told me, "Sixty-five."

"And I also," said I. "Sixty-six. . . . And Grigorie, sixty-seven. . . . And Marcus (my cook) sixty-eight. . . . And I may have guests—seventy. . . . We will say seventy. Now this half here," said I, laying my riding-switch across the pig's back, "will go to thirty-five men. And you cannot eat the bones and the skin and the tail and some other parts. . . . True?"

"True. Precisely so, Mr. Commander."

"Now—hold him steady!—this half is for thirty-five men; and this bit will be for eighteen men and this for seventeen—eighteen and seventeen are the halves of thirty-five. . . . And this bit here will do for nine men. And—but you see now how little meat you will have. True?"

"Precisely so, Mr. Commander. . . . True," they assured me.

"So we will wait until it is a big pig and we will all have a big piece of meat. That will be better."

"Precisely so, that will be better, Mr. Commander."

"Now put him back," said I.

And this matter was also ended amicably, and the pig went back to his abode, there to grow into a decent meal.

"How old are you?" I would ask one of my men.

He would fidget uneasily. Some of the men could not tell me directly. All they could say was the year in which they had been called to the army. "1897" "1900" I had to subtract these numbers from 1917, add twenty-one—and the man's age was found. Before the war all men of twenty-one (with certain exceptions—men physically unfit, only sons, etc.) had to serve in the army for nearly three years.

My men were really very much like boys. Many of

them, too, were "negramotnie"—illiterate; they could neither read nor write. And when I spoke to them I had to bear this fact in mind. One could not be angry with them, no matter how great the cause, without regretting it afterwards. But with the coming of the new Republic, some of them were difficult to handle.

"You are free now," I told them one day. "Many of the old orders no longer exist. For instance, you need not say 'Your Nobility' or 'Your high Nobility' or 'Your Excellence' when you speak to an officer. 'Mr. Captain,' 'Mr. Colonel,' 'Mr. General,' and so forth are what you will say now. Also all officers will call you 'You,' not 'Thou.' But remember this: words are simply words. Whether you say 'Your high Nobility' or 'Mr. Colonel,' whether you say 'Your Excellence,' or 'Mr. General,' whether the officers say 'Thou' or 'You'—this fact remains—before the Revolution you were soldiers and officers were officers—you are still soldiers and officers are still officers. You must always remember that."

One day one of my men preached mutiny on the ground that officers and men were now all equal and that no man had a right to give orders to another. I spoke to him as tactfully and kindly as I could. Then I had to be a little more severe.

"You are a *provocateur*," said I. The Russian word is "Provokator."

"Precisely so, Mr. Commander." He beamed on me and I marvelled at his impudence.

"I will speak to you later," said I and I sent him from my room.

Some time afterwards, I told Grigorie to fetch him to me. He came with a slight swagger.

"You are a *provokator*," said I. "I told you that this morning. You said 'Tak tochno'?"

"Tak tochno. . . . Precisely so, Mr. Commander."

"I am glad you are honest," said I. "Now I must punish you——"

"I am not able to understand, Mr. Commander."

"I must punish you because you are a *provokator*. I cannot allow *provokators* in my command."

"Is it bad, Mr. Commander?" he asked.

"Very," said I seriously.

" Ah ! . . . I am not a *provokator*, Mr. Commander. . . . I thought it was a nice word. I thought you spoke a compliment, and I said, ' Tak tochno ' " . . .

" Grigorie," said I, one evening, " tell me what you think about the Revolution."

I often call Grigorie into my room for a chat—for the pure joy of seeing the affection in his homely face. (Grigorie is married and he tells me that his wife is very pretty—so I know now that women read the hearts and souls of men.)

" I beg your pardon, Mr. Commander," he said.

" What do you think of the Revolution ? " I repeated.

Grigorie's face twitched nervously and he grinned and fidgetted, first on one foot then on the other.

" I am not able to say, Mr. Commander," said he.

" Tell me what you have heard. Tell me what you yourself know of it."

" I am not able to say, Mr. Commander."

" Now, Little Pigeon, don't be afraid. . . . Who was the Emperor last year ? "

" Nicolai Alexandrovitch, Mr. Commander," said he.

" He is not Emperor now. . . . You know that ? "

" Precisely so, Mr. Commander. I know. I understand."

" Then who is ? " said I to draw him on.

" Mihail—" he hesitated, speaking in his thin, feminine voice.

" No," said I, and I told him the meaning of *res publica*, of the president. . . . Of America and France. . . . I spoke to him as one would speak to a loved child. And Grigorie said, " Ah-h-h ! . . . Now I understand, Mr. Commander," and " Ah-h-h ! . . . There, now, Mr. Commander," and " Ah-h-h ! . . . I listen. Now I understand"—to my several remarks. . . . But—alas ! . . . I will tell you.

Later on I heard loud whispers from Grigorie's sleeping space between the doors.

" I know very well," came the voice of Grigorie, the innocent, " Certainly I know very well. . . . But devil knows ! Nicolai Alexandrovitch one day and Mihail Alexandrovitch the next, and nobody the third day. What could I say ? . . . I thought perhaps a Tsar had come again and I was afraid to say ' Republic.'"

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. . . . I said 'Mihail.' Devil knows I knew well enough. . . ."

Oh ! Grigorie ! Grigorie !

And this reminds me of a peasant soldier who was asked what he thought of the Republic.

"It will be very good," said he. "I think it will be very good—if they will only give us a really good Tsar."

. . . .

CHAPTER XXII

SOLDIERS' COMMITTEES

I HAD my first trouble with my men on April 16, Easter Monday in the Russian Calendar. That week, indeed, was the beginning of much trouble in the whole army. I do not know for certain, but I rather fancy my own men were the first to rebel. . . . The trouble arose over the question of Soldiers' Committees which were formed in April. I am in the unfortunate position of hesitating to criticise what I would like to, but I think that no criticism on my part is necessary. The facts are sufficient.

At ten o'clock on Easter Monday morning, four men came to my room without any previous announcement. One of them was my late cook, a most treacherous man whom I had been obliged to remove from my kitchen. In peace-time he had had a little shop on the outskirts of Petrograd. He considered himself a very superior person to the peasant soldiers. Such men as he were the cause of all the unrest that followed on the coming of the Republic. Boisterous, aggressive, ignorant, extreme Socialists of the worst kind, Atheists, men without a drop of patriotic blood in their bodies, they were the noisy leaders who led the way for the simple-minded, simple-hearted peasant soldiers to follow. And the percentage of these workmen malcontents was very small. The percentage of workmen was itself only six. . . .

The ex-cook acted as spokesman, having formerly been in more frequent communication with me than had the others. He was very nervous and he spoke in a loud, excited voice.

"We are the Soldiers' Committee," he said. "Please, Mr. Commander, sign this paper," and he handed me a sheet of foolscap on which were many signatures.

Now, I, of course, had no idea whatever of the real object of the visit, so I simply glanced at the paper.

"What is it to be?" I asked. "A concert?" and I produced some money from my pocket as my subscription and I prepared to sign the paper.

"Not so, no, Mr. Commander," the spokesman cried. "We are a Soldiers' Committee."

Evidently not what I had thought. "Soldiers' Committee?" said I. "I do not understand."

"We are going to have a Committee now to look after the affairs of the Command," said my ex-cook. "We will see to the soldiers' food and clothes. Also we will arrange all holidays for the men. Also if a soldier is bad we will punish him."

This was so amazing that I thought I had not understood. I asked the man to repeat it. . . . There was no mistake. I certainly had heard and understood aright.

"Whose idea is this?" said I to gain time.

The men replied in chorus that every man had thought of it.

"That cannot be," I said. "Each man could not think of such a thing at the same moment. Someone must have suggested the idea to them. I want to know the name of the man who did."

At this they called excitedly that it was a spontaneous idea.

"What other duties will the Committee undertake?" I asked. . . . It would be interesting to know all that they had in mind.

The ex-cook, who was down on the paper as President, answered, "We will see that no man does more work than another. We will get political books and papers for the men. We will supervise the Command."

This was all too amazing! . . . "And what will I do?" I asked.

"Oh!" they answered, again in chorus, "you will be Commander just the same."

Then they asked me to sign the paper authorising

them to act as a Committee in charge of the affairs of the company. Of course I refused. Then they became very rude—two of them at any rate, the ex-cook and a newcomer who said that he was the Secretary.

At this I ordered them to leave my room and I told them that I would deal with them afterwards. They went away speaking loudly to each other. I distinctly heard threats of mutiny. . . . "This," I thought, "is a matter for the Staff," so I set off on horseback to the Divisional Staff quarters.

I told a Staff officer of the men's request, and expected that he would be as surprised as I was.

"Two of them were here this morning," said he, "to ask my advice."

"Which two?" I asked.

He told me. My ex-cook and the secretary. They had left the Command and ridden on horseback to the Staff without a word to the chief soldier or to me. I protested at this and said I must punish the men, who had also been guilty of rudeness. The Chief of Staff agreed. One soldier would return to his former regiment, which was on a different part of the Front; the other would go to the trenches for a while. (The men of my transport had come from various regiments. The majority had been Life-guardsmen.) The first officer went away and the Chief of Staff told me to give the men papers discharging them from my command for insolence and disobedience. Doubtless they were *provocateurs* and we did not want a whole company to be upset on account of two soldiers.

I went off, wrote out the papers, gave them to the two men and then went to speak to the others. They lined up in front of me. I told them that the idea of having a Committee was so preposterous that I scarcely could believe that they had elected one. Then the two culprits interrupted—tried to shout me down and called upon all the men to refuse to obey orders. It was impossible to deal with them, so I went off in disgust. An hour or two later, when it was dark, the chief soldier came to me with a very long face. He advised me to go away at once. The men were mutinous, he said. They were threatening to arrest me, seize the money that they knew I had (the money for the soldiers' food, fodder for

the horses and the company's expenses), take charge of the papers, etc., etc.

I borrowed a horse—it was no use asking for my own—and rode off to the Staff again. There I was told that an order would be issued in a day or two authorising the appointment of Soldiers' Committees! . . . My men had heard of the coming of such an order and had acted ahead of the official notice.

"Very well," I said. "But in the meantime I want you to send military police to arrest the two ringleaders in this trouble."

"Oh! that would be impossible," said the officer whom I had seen first in the morning. . . .

And here I myself must censor all he told me.

"How much money have you in your cash-box?"

"Five thousand roubles," I told him.

"I will send police at once to guard your quarters," said he. "But we must overlook this little dispute. Let the men have their Committee. It is a pity you did not allow it at first."

"But I had no paper authorising such a stupidity!" I exclaimed.

"You will have an advance copy to-morrow," he said. "And I will come and speak to the men myself and explain all to them, if you will permit me."

He then asked me if I would like to spend the night in the Staff. . . . I declined his invitation and set off home again. It was pitch dark. The track was deep in mud and water. I had to trust entirely to my horse to avoid barbed wire and reserve trenches. Rain poured in torrents—and I was cold and wet—and angry. When I reached my quarters I found ten military police there, with rifles and bayonets, and bandoliers of fat cartridges around their shoulders. Five of them rested in Grigorie's tiny sleeping space while the other five were on duty outside. They changed guard every two hours.

In the morning the Staff officer rode up at eight o'clock. We went on foot to where my men lived. They were all in the open in groups. The chief soldier lined them up.

"Good morning," I said.

"We wish you health, Mr. Commander!" they shouted.

That sounded very well—but I knew that it was the military machine which spoke.

"Good morning," said the Staff officer.

"We wish you health, Mr. Lieutenant!" they shouted.

"Khristos Voskresi—Christ is Risen!" said the lieutenant.

"Voistinu Voskresi—Truly He is Risen!" they answered.

Then he explained to them very simply that they had acted too hurriedly. That the official order to appoint a Soldiers' Committee in each camp was not yet issued; that I had acted rightly (*sic*) and that now a paper would be given me and I would at once allow the Committee to be formed, and all would be well, etc., etc. . . . Then he read the notice to them, telling them the duties the Committee would have. Then the ring-leaders asked my pardon and the lieutenant begged me to ask theirs! And we went off again while the company shouted out a farewell in unison.

Every regiment, every lazaret and every *otriad* (detachment) on the Russian Front had its own Committee. There were other Committees formed. Officers' Committees, Doctors' Committees, Feldshers' (men with a certain amount of medical knowledge but with no medical degree) Committees, Military Clerks' Committees. . . . And there were also special Committees in each division for sanitars, Sisters of Charity, Poles, Jews, Americans, Mussulmans, Georgians, and men from "Little Russia." At first there were committee meetings almost daily. Big gatherings were held at the Divisional Staff or at the Corps Staff, in the villages where the men lived when off trench duty, at Nesveezh (where the Army Staff was) and at Minsk, to which each company had to send a delegate, or, on some occasions two. In fact, the Russian Army became a sort of multiplex Trade Union. And strikes were inevitable. . . .

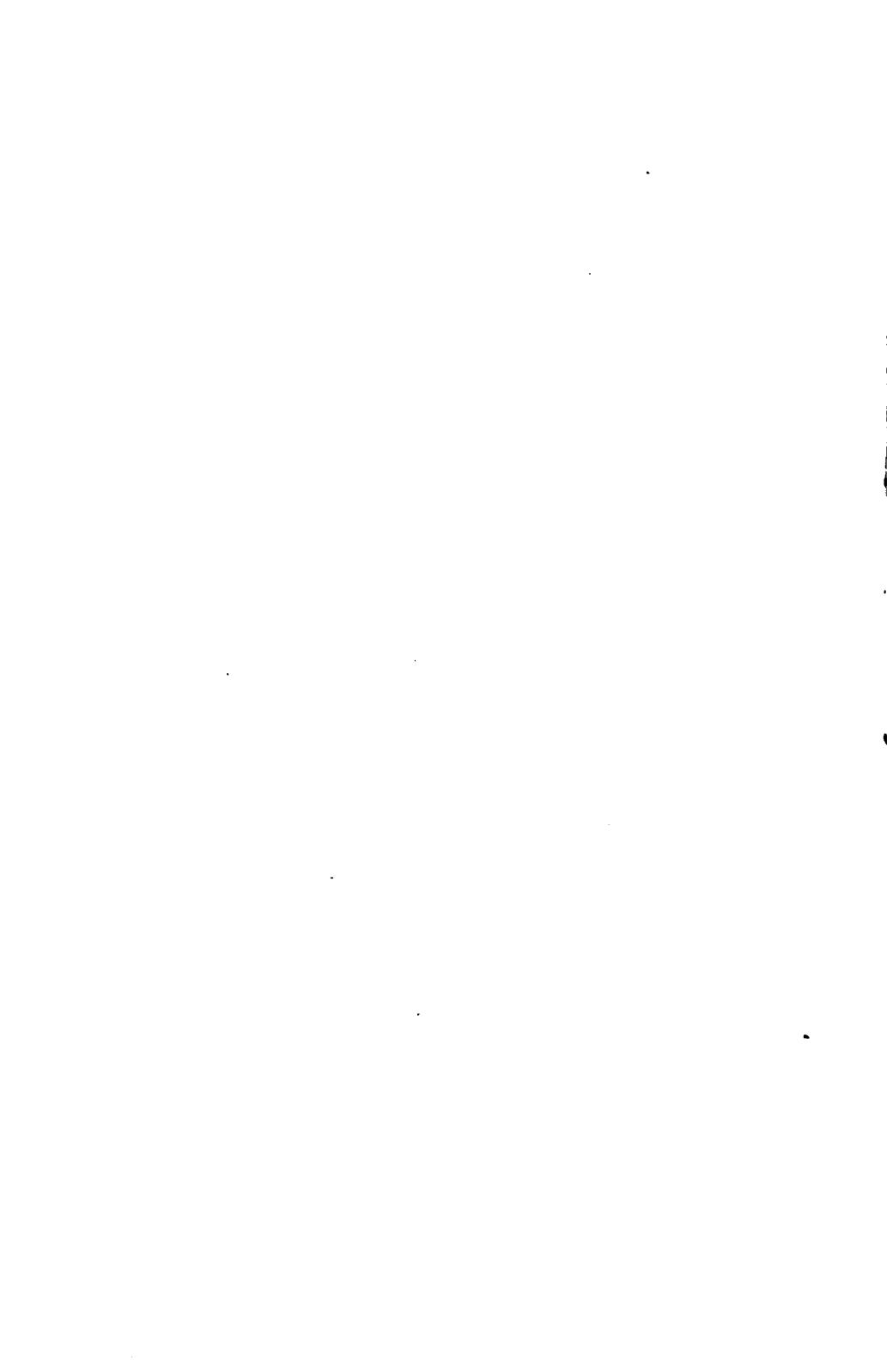
The simple Russian soldier of whom I have written so much of praise went about his duties as usual, but

unfortunately he was very easily influenced by the agitators who rose up in every company, most of whom were of the brand that, for want of a better expression, I must call "Socialist of the worst kind." Perhaps I ought to explain what I mean by "Socialist of the worst kind." . . . These men were very ignorant. They openly preached "Division of Property" on the simple lines that if one man had an estate and a hundred other men had not, the hundred should immediately confiscate the one man's property—and devil take the hindmost! . . . In Petrograd these "Socialists of the worst kind" actually preached the repudiation of Russia's financial debt to the Allies. . . . "Why should we give anything to England?" they cried. "Let England lose it. We are not responsible for what debts the Monarchy incurred."

In Petrograd, amongst the workmen were very many believers in Germany's virtue. Undoubtedly there were still very many German agents still at work in the Capital. (Later I will write of the soldiers' attitude towards the Germans at the Front.) The exiled Socialist Lenin returned—via Berlin. A host of other extreme Socialists also returned from abroad. Lenin preached "Peace at any price" . . . He urged the workmen to strike and thus bring about a separate peace. The "Blue Journal"—a popular fifteen kopeck publication—published in May a cartoon of Lenin and his followers. Lenin marched at the head with a band on his shoulders on which were the words "Peace in any form." The Kaiser, leading the ex-Tsar by the hand (the latter appeared as a very little boy) came next. "Truth" was on his band and a mass of matter followed that heading. The third man had a band on which were the words "Down with England, France and America!!!". . . This cartoon was called "the latest manifestation via Berlin". . . In April the workmen published a statement in Petrograd that Mr. Lloyd George and M. Briand were men of the "Stürmer" class—if not worse! And it was freely stated that Mr. Lloyd George was in German pay and that we were all being sold. . . On the contrary—it was also stated in other Russian papers that Lenin was in German pay; that he had received much money from the Kaiser and that he had come to

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Russia solely on Germany's behalf. . . . Lenin started a newspaper called "Soldatskia Pravda" ("Soldiers' Truth")—in which he urged the men to refuse to attack. If the soldiers would strike, peace was certain to come at once. Why this journal was allowed, God only knows. One of my own men received it regularly by army post. . . . I spoke to a Staff Colonel one day about Lenin's newspaper. "Free Russia!" he answered by way of explanation. "But to urge the soldiers not to obey their officers!" "Free Russia!" he answered—then he questioned me as to how a Russian might become an English officer. . . .

In Petrograd America and France were quoted by well-meaning folk as model republics.

"What! France?" the workmen cried. "Middle-class, reactionary France! And America! middle-class! We will show the world what kind of a republic is the best. Ours will be superior to all other republics."

Alas! Alas! And these workmen numbered less than six per cent. of all the Russian population.

A Russian judge spoke to me seriously.

"In our army," he said, "six hundred and sixty-five men in each thousand— $66\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.—are illiterate. And the proportion of all the illiterates in all Russia is even more. And we have heathen—pagans amongst our subjects here, white men who know not God—and we have a Republic in which the few ignorant dupes of German lies will lead and all the others will follow like sheep."

So Committees came into force. The Russian soldier had been given a very good inch; the Committees proceeded to demand an over-measure ell. They asked—and they received. They asked again—and again they received. I will tell of some of the concessions granted to them.

Immediately after the coming of the Republic, an order was issued by the War Minister that in future (1) soldiers would not be referred to as "Nizhni Tchine"—"Inferior rank," but "soldat"—"soldier." (2) Soldiers would in future address their officers as "Gospodin General" ("Mr. General,") "Mr. Colonel," "Mr. Doc-

tor," etc., instead of "Your Excellence," "Your high Nobility," and "Your Nobility." (8) Officers would no longer address soldiers as "Te" ("Thou"), but as "V've" ("You"). (One used the second person singular in Russian when speaking to one's wife, or when praying to God, or when addressing servants.) (4) Soldiers would in future be allowed to smoke in the streets, visit freely all public places, and ride in the interior of tramway cars. Formerly soldiers travelled on the end open platform of tramway cars. They were not allowed to go into the car itself.

All these reforms were excellent. The Russian soldier was undoubtedly very ill-treated in former times. The second person singular ought not to have been used to the men who were giving their lives for their country; it was a sign of something akin to contempt. . . . The "Your Excellence" and "Your High Nobility" phrases which he had to use to every officer and bureaucrat were further signs of the servility of his position. So was the term "Nizhni Tchine." And it was a scandal that any man in civilian clothes—no matter how unclean!—could enter a tramway car and sit down, while the Russian soldiers were treated very much like dogs.

Then in quick succession came the following reforms and proclamations:—

(1) Abolition of corporal punishment.

(2) All deserters who had been sentenced to hard labour would be released from their punishment and sent back to the Front.

(3) Each regiment, *otriad* (detachment), lazaret, etc., would have its own Soldiers' Committee.

(4) Soldiers could go everywhere with the freedom of a civilian. They could also travel second or even first class in trains if they cared to pay the difference between the third-class fare (all soldiers travelled third class free of charge) and that of the higher class in which they wished to travel.

(I know of some officers who bought first-class tickets for several of their most untidy men and sent them on a journey for the joy of shocking the civilian first-class passengers. . . .)

(5) Soldiers' pay, which had been 50 kopecks per month in peace-time and which was 75 kopecks per

month in time of war, would in future be tenfold—5 roubles in peace-time, and 7 roubles 50 kopecks in war-time.

(This also was excellent. Wages of a little more than a halfpenny a day were not generous. The rouble had so far declined in value that in 1916 the men's weekly wage was equivalent to threepence, and the purchasing power of a rouble had still further declined so that the 75 kopecks were really worth not more than sixpence.)

(6) Jews would be admitted as officers. (No Jew was an officer in the Russian Army, with the exception of doctors and dentists, of whom very many were Jewish.)

"More! More!" cried Lenin and his followers. On May 24, a further order was issued by the new Minister of War, Kerensky, who had succeeded Mr. Goutchkov. The following are briefly the eighteen reforms announced in the *prekas* :—

(1) One law for all—soldiers and civilians.

(2) Soldiers may be members of whatever organisation, company or union they wish, whether political, national, religious, economic or professional.

(3) Each soldier when not on duty may speak, read and write freely and openly his political, religious, social and other views.

(4) Soldiers need not attend the Russian Church unless they wish.

(5) Soldiers may write letters with the freedom of civilians.

(6) Soldiers may order whatever newspapers, etc., they wish to receive by post, giving their army address.

(7) Soldiers, with the exception of those of the active army, may wear civilian dress when off duty.

In towns near the position and included in the battle area, though not near the zone of fire, the Commander may grant permission to his men to wear civilian dress when not on duty. (Such a town is Minsk. The soldiers there are considered as belonging to the active army.)

(8) All soldiers must treat their fellows with mutual trust, confidence and civility.

(9) The abolition of the special phrases used by soldiers

when answering their officers. (The Russian soldier had an official language of his own) :

<i>Old Style.</i>	<i>New Style.</i>
" Tak Tochno " ... " Precisely so."	" Da " " Yes."
" Nikak Nyet " ... " Not so, no."	" Nyet " ... " No."
" Ne mogu Z'Nat " " I am not able to know."	" Ne Z'Naoo " " I do not know."
" Rad Staratsia " ... " I am glad to endeavour (to do my best)."	" Postaraaos " " I endeavour (to do my best)."

(These answers are given by the soldiers on their officers saying " Thank you " to them) :

" Dravia Zhelao " " I wish you health," etc. " Z'Dravstvu. eete " etc. " Good morn- ing," etc.

(10) Soldiers need not act as *denschiks*—orderlies—unless they wish. Officers may have orderlies to attend to their horses and to accompany them when on horse-back, driving, etc.

(Officers were free to have a civilian man-servant, or when no men were available, they could engage a peasant woman or domestic servant.)

(11) If a soldier acts as *denschik* he must also work as an ordinary soldier. (Officers must pay him additional money for his services to them personally.)

(12) Soldiers when not on duty may or may not salute officers—just as they like.

(13) When off duty, soldiers may go for walks where they like. The Commander must give them a written *Laissez-passer*.

In the case of naval men in harbour, enough men must always remain on board ship to man her in the event of her sailing suddenly becoming necessary.

(14) Officers may not punish soldiers without consulting the Soldiers' Committee and the Soldier Judge. This does not apply to the Active Army where officers entirely on their own responsibility may order a soldier to be shot for disobedience.

(15) All punishment pernicious to health, insulting or torturous to be abolished. " Under the Rifle "

punishment also abolished. (This consisted of a two hours' stand with rifle shouldered and full marching kit strapped on the soldier, during which time the man was not allowed to shift his position as much as a single inch, else the punishment would be increased.)

(16) A Statute of Disciplinary punishment to be issued. No other punishment save what is written in the official "Book of Rules" may be given. Officers themselves will be brought before a military judge if they order other punishment than that officially prescribed in the Statute book.

(17) Abolition of corporal punishment in gaol for soldiers.

(18) Soldiers may not object to their commanders or other men of rank higher than their own. Soldiers may not give orders.

These concessions speak for themselves. Some of them go to show that the Russian soldier in the past was not treated as he ought to have been. He was regarded very much as a slave. I once wrote that I would rather be a prisoner of war in Russia than a simple soldier in the Russian Army. . . . The question of his monthly wage would have been of small importance had other conditions been good. One has few expenses at the Front. One receives one's food from a more or less generous Government. Luxuries are only occasionally to be had and these are to be bought only when one visits a town. . . . What are my own expenses? . . . I buy tobacco, soap and insect powder. . . . The Russian soldier receives a generous allowance of *machorka* and soap. Also he receives matches and cigarette paper free of charge. Insect powder he never thinks of: live and let live—and he even begins to think this motto in connection with the enemy. . . .

But other conditions were not good. His clothes were of very cheap material for the most part—very often they were very ragged and worn. Boots, too. I saw Russian soldiers in the retreat from Warsaw whose boot soles were fastened to the uppers with string and wire. I saw some soldiers who had no boots at all. They limped along bare-footed. . . . A soldier's wife in Russia received an allowance of nine roubles a

month. Children up to the age of ten or so were allowed four and a half roubles monthly, and older children up to the age of sixteen had nine roubles a month allotted to them. These sums were sufficient for peasants' living allowances before the war, but with the increased cost of living in war-time the total allowance for a woman and, say, four children under ten years of age, was worth rather less than a pound a month, English money.

The Russian soldiers' food was simple and good as a rule—black bread, kasha, cabbage-soup, meat and tea. But there were times when the food was very bad. During the retreat the Russian soldier very often had only stale black bread—*green with mould*—to eat. . . . The general living conditions were bad, too. In the spring of 1917 I know that a whole regiment was down with scurvy, caused by the unhealthy living quarters and the poorness of the food of the men. . . . Russian soldiers travelled to the Front in goods wagons—very crowded wagons they were, too. . . .

And it is because the Russian soldier was such a badly-off fellow and yet never once complained, but fought magnificently in spite of all—spite of his bad equipment, spite of his food or lack of food, spite of the terrible shortage of ammunition in the first year of war—because of that I will always think affectionately of him, with not a little pride that I have been in charge of Russian men.

CHAPTER XXIII

“ AMONGST THOSE KILLED. . . .”

Two summers on the Russian Front ; two winters ; and now the smiling-weeping days of my third spring. “ Two years ago,” I can say now ; or else : “ A year ago to-day ” ; and then discuss the altered battle line. April, for instance, stands for Poland—and Smorgon, east of Vilna—and where I am to-day. I read the pencilled notes of scrappy diaries and think how quickly time has flown—and yet how very far away are those two twelve-month spans. And I find days that I must mark on all my future calendars. Days of great joy that I must celebrate ; days of great grief when I must turn my thoughts to absent friends ; days of great danger—that I must not forget. . . .

To-day is April 29. The Russian date is thirteen days behind, but I still count in English time. The Colonel came in for lunch. Also old “ Batushka ”—“ Father ”—the army priest, who is as much at home with us as if he’d never known the quiet monastery from which he came. Sergei Vladimirovitch, a captain of a neighbouring regiment, too ; and three young officers from the Divisional Staffs. And we dined, and smoked, and talked of other years.

Nicolai Mihailovitch, who smokes an English pipe though he is just as Russian as caviare, puffed hard and asked us if we thought the enemy could hold out till another spring. “ If they can,” said he, “ heaven knows what we will do to them.” And then he talked about the past two years and of the great events we prophesied when once the spring arrived.

“ Great Allied attack, spring, 1915,” he said, flip-

pantly. "Greater Allied attack, spring, 1916. Greatest Allied attack due any moment now. The spring," he added, "will go down to history as the time when we Allies would really begin to fight,"—and then he talked of last year and of the year before.

"Now," said he, "what happened a year ago to-day?"

The captain answered. I do not think he had listened much to what Nicolai Mihailovitch had said.

"A year ago to-day," said he, "my brother, Vladimir, was killed at Lake Narotch."

II

Official reports, I have already written, are crudely blunt. No newspaper has space enough to print them otherwise. Behind the death of every simple soldier there is a romance. This man, for instance, was a peasant from the North; and this a fisher from the Caspian Sea. This man came from far east Siberia; and this, a Tartar, from a Crimean vineyard. This man has left a widow and an orphan boy in a village on the Volga's banks; and this an aged mother, toiling in the Little Russian fields to keep the cottage home as he had done. Oh! what romances one could write—if one but knew. . . . if one but knew. . . .

"The situation remains unchanged" means very much more than these four words tell. It means, sometimes, attacks and counter-charges; trenches lost and taken once again; night expeditions across the deadly No Man's Land with searchlights, evil-eyes, sweeping the ground with damning glare, rendering futile the former safety of the covering dark. It means, sometimes, a thousand men from the two sides. . . . And pain and suffering in Red Cross camps; and pain and sorrow in a thousand homes. Five hundred lost to us; five hundred lost to them. And we are here again, and they still are across the way. The situation—spite of all—remains the same. . . .

"Yesterday we brought down one aeroplane" tells nothing of the bombs that came down from the sky. It tells nothing of the flights of the machine—of the wonder of it sailing through a shoal of little shrapnel clouds. It tells nothing of the death it meted out; nothing of the

men who crashed to earth or of their folks in Germany ; nothing of that fine chivalry that sent a Russian man to face a deadly fire that he might drop a message telling of the foes' fate.

• "One civilian was killed" . . . One says, "Oh ! that's nothing !" —but I have told of Sokaloff and of the wife who waited his return.

"Vladimir Vladimirovitch—Properchik." One name in a tabulated list. And that was all. Folks glanced with almost casual interest at the names, then turned away to other paragraphs. The death of one lieutenant more or less has no great military significance, one might say.

"A year ago to-day, my brother, Vladimir, was killed at Lake Narotch," said the captain. "Gentlemen, if you will hear me, I will tell you a romance."

The facts are simply these :—

III

"My brother's company—he was a lieutenant in the _____th Regiment—was cut off from the main army in July, 1915. Furthermore, it was surrounded by German troops so that the men, hopelessly outnumbered, had to defend attacks from back and front. Only two hundred Russian soldiers ; devil knows how many German men. My brother's company faced the enemy alternately—one man turned towards the west, the next towards the east, the third towards the west, and so on. An unequal contest ? . . . These words are not strong enough. Vladimir saw most of his men fall. He himself was working a mitrailleuse when suddenly he was pulled from it, an enemy revolver at his head. He had been so intent on his work that he knew nothing of the foe who had advanced quickly from behind. Why he was not shot I do not know. He was made prisoner along with what few men still remained.

"For three days he was kept in a pig-sty—a filthy place !—with two other Russian officers as his companions. On the fourth day they were taken to a large house where the German Divisional Staff was

living. The owner—this was in Poland, of course—was the proprietor of much of the land around. You, gentlemen, have lived in just such houses. The conditions were certainly better here, and the officers were allowed a certain amount of freedom. They could go about the house as they wished. They could even go into the garden, but beyond that it was impossible for anyone in Russian uniform to go.

"The proprietor and his wife and daughter, who still remained in their house, were very good to the captive men. The daughter was a Sister of Mercy in a lazaret in the village. She had nursed the wounded Russian men; now she was working with the German wounded. She was young and pretty. My brother spoke much to me of her. . . . One day, about a week after their capture, she told him that he would probably be sent off to Germany in a couple of days or so. Vladimir did a very bold thing. He decided to trust her. He told her that he meant to try to escape. If she would help him, he had a big chance of getting away.

"'But it is impossible!' she said. 'You simply must not take the risk. You would be shot at once!'

"'Well,' said he, 'even that will be better than being kept prisoner for devil knows how many months—or years. Captivity will drive me mad. I cannot even think of it. . . . Will you help me?'

"She promised to do so if she could, and he told her the plan he had in mind. You will hear of it presently.

"'And you will do that?' she asked.

"'Yes,' said Vladimir. 'It is the only way.'

"'And you will be an enemy soldier?' she said.

"My brother's answer—he told me of it—was romantic. 'I will be your soldier, Sister,' said he. 'If I escape I will owe my freedom to you—and freedom means life to me. And—no one will know if I shoot straight or not!'

"Three days later—why he was not taken away sooner simply shows how very busy the Germans were at that time—the girl told him in the evening that all was ready for his escape. From her lazaret she had managed to fetch home each night in instalments a complete German uniform—the tunic of a wounded man, the trousers of another, finally the boots and cap of a third. She sewed a Red Cross on the tunic sleeve

and made the clothes look exactly like those of a German sanitär, of whom she saw many each day.

"Vladimir gave her a letter to send to me when war is over. He had been able to write it during the night, and in it he wrote of his attempted escape, of his plans to get back to Russia, and all particulars whereby his fate might be known to us should his venture prove unsuccessful. And he promised Sestra that he would come to her again 'after the war.' He kissed her hand and she kissed him on the forehead as he bent to do so. We have that custom in Russia, too. It is very pretty."

I nodded. The last two sentences were addressed specially to me.

"She held up a rug in a corner of the room and he changed his clothes behind it. She promised to burn his Russian uniform. Then off he went—boldly out of the house—a German sanitär! Only once, on his way towards the village, was he stopped by a sentry. He replied in good German that he was on his way to the lazaret after taking a message to one of the Staff officers. Nothing more was said, so on he boldly marched. He came to a peasant's cottage on the way. It was dusk and no one was in sight, so he went quickly into the house. An old peasant was living there all alone. I know his name and address ; he will be rewarded when the war is done. . . . Vladimir again took a great risk.

"'I am a Russian officer,' he said. 'I have just escaped from the Germans. I have managed to steal a soldier's clothes. Give me up and you will send me to my death. Help me and you will have your reward.'

"He begged the old man to assist him and his plans were successful. For four weeks he lay in a garret under the roof. The old man took him food and drink and attended to him in his hiding-place. He also supplied him with an old suit of clothes and with a cap and boots. At the end of a month no one could have recognised him. He had quite a beard and moustache. He was entirely changed. The Germans, too, had advanced, so that the former Divisional Staff was no longer in the district. He did not see Sestra again. I think he would have liked to, but he had fears for her as well as—well, more than for himself. One night he set off to another village. He went to the German Army quarters and

said he was an Austrian Pole and that he wished to go into the Austrian Army as a volunteer. They examined him and found him to be quite sincere. And he was, gentlemen! No man ever wanted more to be an Austrian soldier than Vladimir did at that time. He spoke German fluently, and Polish well enough. They sent him south to where the Austrians were. He was accepted and sent well back from the fighting line to be drilled as a soldier.

"It was September by this time and he was drilled and trained and taught to shoot for many weeks. Then he asked to be allowed to go off to the firing line. His shooting was good; so was his general soldiering, so off he went. He told me that one of the hardest things of all was to pretend ignorance of a science he knew so much about. . . . Another week, and he was in the trenches, facing the Russian men. For what seemed an age to him he stayed in the Austrian firing line, but in this time he learnt that several Austrian Poles were keen to give themselves up. A little party formed together. Then one early morning, before it was light, they left the Austrian lines and made the perilous crossing to the Russian trench. Both Russians and Austrians shot at them, but Vladimir gave himself up without being wounded.

"Before the Russian staff he told his story. No one believed him. It was scarcely credible. But field telegraphs were got into motion and an answer came that an officer had certainly been lost and that the news he gave of himself and of his former army comrades was correct. He was sent to the quarters of his old regiment where he was recognised and welcomed back again. This was in February of last year. He had a month's rest—he could have had much more if he had wished—then went off to the Front again.

"And, gentlemen—a year ago to-day—Vladimir died at Lake Narotch."

IV

The captain drew out his pocket-book and took two photographs from it.

"Here is my brother as he was when he rejoined the Russian Army," he said, and showed us an unkempt, unshaven soldier wearing Austrian dress.

"And here is he a month before his death."

The photo was of a very handsome young man. I noticed the St. George's Cross upon his breast.

"Good looking—so very good looking," said Nicolai Mihailovitch, muttering to himself. Then, "Poor little Sestra!" said he. "Dreaming—dreaming—dreaming. . . ."

The captain nodded.

"A wonderful story," said the Colonel. "A most wonderful story. It is almost a miracle how he managed to get back unhurt to his old regiment."

Nicolai Mihailovitch—Nicolai, the dear sentimentalist—smiled wisely.

"*Ce que femme veut, Dieu le veut,*" he said.

CHAPTER XXIV

MY COMMAND—II

ONE of my men came to me one day and asked for a certificate of his bachelorhood. He was about to go away on a fortnight's holiday and he wished to get married while in his home village. Hence the request for the official sanction. Of course I had no sure knowledge as to whether the man was married or not, but I took a chance and gave him the certificate he wanted. He took an oath that he had no wife—and he went off happily with my paper (to him a sort of licence) in his boot. . . . The Russian soldier carries his notebook and his private papers and his wooden spoon in the leg of his boot.

A week later another man came nervously to my room. A very nice-looking young soldier of twenty-five. This man's home is in Irkutsh. He asked my permission to get married. He coupled with this request an invitation to me to attend the ceremony as "Posazhonii Otets"—nuptial godfather. . . . This was a war-area romance. He told me all about the lady. She was a refugee who had retreated a few versts in front of the army, had stopped when the army stopped, and so had remained only a few versts from the firing line. Her name was "Fenia" (Euphemia). To him, he told me naively, she was very beautiful. "Perhaps you, Mr. Commander, may not think so," he added.

"Well," said I, answering his request, "it is difficult for me to say 'Yes' or 'No.' I do not know all the rules of the Russian Army."

"It is entirely all right, Mr. Commander," said he. "There has been no *prekas* (order) that we must not be married."

That settled it as far as he was concerned. If there was no order to the contrary.

"It all depends on you, Mr. Commander," he pleaded, interrupting my thoughts.

"Oh, very well," said I. "I will sign a paper for you allowing you to be married."

"Very much obliged, Mr. Commander."

I did not tell him—there was no need—that it was chiefly out of curiosity that I granted his request so speedily. I had not seen a wedding in Russia. A marriage ceremony at the Front would be very interesting. Heaven knows we needed something to amuse us! . . . A dreadful thought struck me.

"Listen," said I. "You don't want your wife to live here with you, do you?" I asked. "That is impossible."

"Not so, no, Mr. Commander," he said. "I will be married. I have asked the Committee, Mr. Commander, to give me two weeks' holiday. I will take my wife to my home and leave her there, then I will come back here again."

To be married—to go by crowded uncomfortable train to the centre of Siberia—to come back again to war—it could not be done in the time. I told him so. Perhaps Mr. Commander would be good enough to grant an extra week's holiday. . . . Even then, as far as I could see, he would only have a day at his home.

"How old are you?"

"I have twenty-five years, Mr. Commander."

"And your fiancée?"

"Nineteen, Mr. Commander."

"All right," said I.

"May I go now, Mr. Commander?" he said.

"You may," said I, and he went off.

I consulted my friend and adviser. Nicolai Mihailovitch, on the matter.

"I am going to be fairy godfather at a wedding," said I. "What will I have to do?"

"You will have to be very careful," he said, "or you will be married to a Russian peasant girl."

I laughed.

"You need not laugh," he said. "You do not speak Russian perfectly"—I speak very badly—"and you

certainly do not understand the special words. . . . You will have to be very careful."

" You had better come with me to protect me—to hold a sort of watching brief on my behalf ! " said I. " Seriously, what have I to do ? "

" It will cost you at least fifty roubles," said the practical Nicolai. " You will have to present the couple with an ikon. You will give them this in church. Batushka (" Father"—the army priest) will tell you how to make the presentation. Then you can kiss the bride—if she is interesting."

" And if not ? "

" Oh !—you can shake hands. It all depends on you."

" It all depends on the lady ! " said I. " What else must I do ? "

" Well—first of all you must take the woman to church. The bridegroom must not do that. And you must give the ikon and see the business through. Then you can kiss the lady or not—just as you like—then you can go back to camp with her or not—just as you like—and you can sing and dance and join in the festival—just as you like."

" Shall we walk to church ? " said I.

" My God ! No ! " he cried. " You must drive. She will sit at your right side. Then you can give the carriage to the couple when the ceremony is over and go back on horseback—or else you can sit three on a seat with them."

I sought out the long-haired army priest.

" Batushka," said I, " what must I do as godfather at a wedding ? How do I present the ikon ? "

" You must have two ikons," said the priest, and he told me all that I would have to do. First, of course, I would have to take the bride to church and hand her over to the bridegroom who would be waiting there. He would kiss her hand. Then I would have to go up to the altar, turn round and face the couple who would kneel before me. With one ikon I would have to make the sign of the Cross over the man and hold it, the ikon, for him to kiss. Then I would have to give him it, and with the other ikon make the sign of the Cross over the woman, hold the ikon for her to kiss and then

give it to her. Each would hold an ikon to his or her breast during the ceremony. I would have to stand behind the couple like a sort of guardian angel. . . .

"Then when the ceremony is over, they will turn round and thank you. You will shake hands with the couple—the bridegroom first—and congratulate them. Also you will kiss both of them—the bridegroom first—on the mouth."

"My God!" I cried. . . . I have already said that one can say that in Russian. It is quite a good expression. . . . "I surely need not kiss my own soldier!"

"You must," said the priest, gravely. "You will be a godfather to the couple."

"I don't mind kissing the bride, Batushka, if she is nice. But must I really kiss the man as well?"

"Certainly you must," said Batushka.

"Very well," said I, resigned, "I will think about it. . . . If the bride is really 'interesting' as Nicolai Mihailovitch says, I will go through the ordeal with the husband first and have the sweets after!"

I invited the couple to come and see me in the evening, three days before the ceremony took place. Nicolai Mihailovitch suggested unkindly that I wanted to know whether I should back out from my "fairy god-father" job before it was too late! . . . They came shyly. The girl curtseyed to me. I shook hands. Grigorie brought tea and hovered over us like the guardian angel of us all. The girl was very pretty in a way. A very quiet, gentle, sun-browned face, dark shining eyes—very soft and very sweet. Her hands were strong and roughened with much hard work. She wore the head-scarf of the Russian peasant women—a pink and white one. Over her shoulders was a red and black checked shawl. Also she had a Russian blouse of white home-made cloth, with hand-worked red and blue embroidery on it. Some ladies in England would have given much money for this peasant work.

A refugee, she told me, from the government of Grodno. Her father had died during the great retreat of 1915.

"You do not know, Mr. Commander. . . ." she said.

I, however, had seen, and I was able to understand much.

The couple told me what they would do after the war. The soldier had a little farm in Siberia. The bride would go there and work in the fields and wait for peace to come. Then the pair would till the ground together—and work hard all the rest of their lives. The happiness in their faces was good to see. . . . Twenty-five years of age—and nineteen. . . . I found it in my heart to envy them.

"Have you a wife, Mr. Commander?" the girl asked me. She had a very nice soft voice, too.

"No," said I.

"Why not, Mr. Commander?" she asked with the simplicity of a child.

I could not answer. I have sometimes wondered "Why not?" myself. . . .

At one o'clock on the following Sunday, my carriage came for me. In it I drove to the cottage where the bride and several other refugee families lived. It was crowded with peasant women and children. I had no idea there were so many in the district. The women wore dresses of pink or blue stuff. The bride was dressed in white with pink ribbons. She wore a home-made Russian head-dress of thick white veil stuff with a long veil of the same material. Little leaves were seen on the head-dress and veil—leaves somewhat like laurel ones, only much smaller. She also wore white lace mittens—they accentuated the roughness and the redness of her poor work-hardened hands. Her brown eyes were splendid.

There was a large wooden table down one side of the room. A great loaf of special bread, decorated with wild flowers was there, also *kvass* in bottles and jugs and even in ration kettles! The bride herself sewed an imitation white flower bouquet on my tunic. She also broke the thread with her teeth and bit off the end close to the flower, incidentally nearly gouging my eye with her head-dress. The bridesmaids sewed favours on the tunics of three of my soldiers who were going to officiate in the ceremony. I was then invited to sit in the ikon corner. Above

me were cheap coloured pictures of Jesus and the Saints, a picture of Christ on the Cross and one of the Holy Mother. On my right was the deputy mother of the soldier. Next to her was the deputy father of the girl—then the girl's mother, a very faded peasant woman of forty. On my left were the three bridesmaids.

Two glasses of *kvass* were filled and given to me and the deputy mother. We clinked glasses and drank to the happiness of the young couple. "Di Bog! . . . God give! . . ." said the company. The others at the table each drank a toast out of our glasses. After this the bridegroom walked between us and the table up to the ikon corner, crossed himself, and kissed the hands of the two mothers. The bride followed him. She crossed herself, kissed her mother's hand (the mother made the sign of the Cross over her), kissed the hands of the deputy father and the deputy mother, was kissed by the latter, kissed my hand—held her face up to me and was kissed by me. . . .

A fancy cloth was spread on the floor at the other side of the table. The couple knelt down towards the ikon corner. Each of us took the ikon (there was only one needed after all) which I had bought, and made the sign of the Cross with it over the couple's heads. First, the girl's mother, then the deputy mother, then the deputy father—then I. The bride and bridegroom kissed the ikon. After this we were ready to go to the church.

Our carriage was decked with branches and flowers. We had borrowed two carriages from a neighbouring regiment, and we had our own transport wagons for the other guests. The bridegroom and his soldier friends drove off first. The bride, the bridesmaids and I drove in the second carriage, and soldiers and peasant women and girls followed in transport wagons.

We raced across the plain to a village some versts away. Luckily, it was not a German "demonstration" day. . . . Dust rose in clouds, but we were all very happy. I forgot all about the war. I think we all did.

The church was crowded with soldiers. Another wedding was taking place. A surprising number of

peasant women were there, too, but not a single man in civilian dress. When the first ceremony was over we went to the back of the church to the priest's room to sign our names. An untidy room it was. Along the wall of one side was a row of empty wine bottles. A wide-mouthed brass vessel was full of brown candle ends. A bottle of Communion wine, half empty, stood on the priest's table. Beside it was the Communion cup.

"What name is this?" the priest asked me, after I had signed my name most legibly.

I told him.

"Robert Ivanovitch," he said. "Robert Ivanovitch—What is the rest?"

I told him. All the time he eyed me with suspicion.

"It is not a Russian name," said he.

"I know," said I, refusing to help him.

"It is French, perhaps?" he suggested.

"No," said I.

He coughed, then said my name aloud and drummed with his pen on the table.

"Englishman, Batushka," whispered the bride. "Englishman."

"Ah! Anglachanyin?" he beamed on me.
"How do you do?" said he.

Fenia and I entered church together. The ikon ceremony was not necessary—that in the cottage was enough. A tired-looking peasant woman who was acting as some important official placed the ikon on the priest's table. The bridegroom stood in front of it. I handed him the bride. I stood at attention behind them I do not know the words the priest chanted. I do not know the words that the choir of three soldiers and two boys sang. . . . At one point in the ceremony, the priest tied the right hand of the girl and the left hand of the man together with a napkin. Two of my men (also officials) each received a gilt ornamental crown, which they grasped gingerly with handkerchiefs in their hands as though they were burning hot. One soldier held a crown above the bridegroom's head: the other a crown above the bride's head. The priest walked round his little table

three times, followed by the bridal couple and the two soldiers still holding the crowns an inch above the couple's heads. Then came the Sacrament—then the priest took each crown in turn and held it to the bridegroom and the bride to kiss. The priest gave each a silver ring. The choir sang loudly. The priest opened the glass of the ikon and the man and the woman kissed the sacred picture. Then he held his cross to them, and they kissed it. The ceremony was at an end. The newly-married couple went to the altar rail to pray. The priest went off hurriedly to his own room, disrobing as he went. . . . The couple finished praying. . . . They crossed themselves. . . .

"Pozdravli-u vas zakonim brakom!" I said. "I congratulate you on your wedding—" and I had to kiss the happy couple. . . .

The matter of kissing the soldier was a mere pretence—a sort of stage kiss! But everybody kissed the bride three times. And we filed out of the church. . . . A drive across the plain. The bride and bridegroom in front: the bridesmaids and I followed—and then the guests. A drive past camps and dug-outs—with little groups of soldiers to stand and look at us in wonder. A joyous wedding party within the zone of fire!

Into the crowded cottage room again. A group of soldiers played melodeons and balalaikas outside. Others danced. We all drank the couple's health in *kvass*, also we ate cold meat and white bread and salt fish. More dancing, in which I was invited to join, and then a most important ceremony.

A hand-embroidered towel was fastened across my shoulder and breast and under my left arm like a sash. A coloured print handkerchief was pinned to my left side and I took my place on the right of the bride who sat in the ikon corner. The tired-looking peasant woman who had carried the ikon to the church commenced to carry out a curious ceremony. First of all she removed the bride's headdress, passed it three times in a circle above the bride's head, then placed it beneath the ikon. Then she took out the combs in the bride's hair and the bride herself undid the plaits. The tired-looking woman then made a new

coiffure, and placed a bunch of artificial flowers on the bride's head. Three times she did this, and three times the bride took the flowers from her head and threw them on the table. The fourth time the tired-looking woman fixed the flowers securely with some hair-pins. The bride's mother commenced to weep. . . . The throwing down of the flowers was a pretended sign of the bride's desire to remain a maiden. The guests assembled at the table.

A soldier, one of my men who was apparently Master of Ceremonies, took his place beside the large loaf of white bread decorated with wild flowers. There was a special small loaf beside this. He put this and a glass of *kvass* on a plate and another soldier handed it to me.

"Ot molodovo e molodoi dla Gospodina Natchalnika" ("From the newly-married man and the newly-married woman for Mr. Commander,") he said.

I stood up, received the loaf and drank the *kvass*. I made a little speech wishing the couple happiness, etc., etc. "Do Bog! . . . God give!" everyone cried. . . . Also I placed a bank note on the plate.

"Ot Gospodina Natchalnika dla molodovo e molodoi!" he called, and handed it to the young couple who were now both seated on my left. They rose and bowed and thanked me. Also the bride insisted on kissing me again. Nicolai Mihailovitch would have called her "interesting."

This performance was repeated for every guest present. The sums of money varied. Some of the peasant women gave pieces of cloth. Some others gave only a few kopecks—their all, indeed.

A man played a melodeon. Some soldiers sang the song of "Stenka Reizin"—also "Solovei" ("the nightingale").

"The nightingale is a little bird
The nightingale sings a little song. . . ."

Into the welcome open air. A company of soldiers from other regiments sat on tree trunks around the cottage door. Dancing and music and welcome intervals of silence. . . . The twilight and stars coming in the

sky. A greyness on the plain. . . . A soldier playing a folk-song on a violin—he made the violin sing. The stirring notes were very sweet. . . . Night and the men went off on duty. I walked across the plain to my own quarters.

One day a very excited peasant came to me with a complaint. He had been to see a peasant girl in the district when suddenly one of my men who was in love with the girl arrived and promptly beat him.

"All right," I told him, when he had finished his sad tale, and he went off sulkily and angrily:

I saw him telling the whole story over again to the sentry at the edge of the wood. I saw his gestures, indicating how and where the blows had fallen.

Nicolai Mihailovitch was with me at the time.

"What are you going to do about it?" said he with a smile, after the enraged peasant had gone off.

"Do about what?" said I.

Nicolai Mihailovitch eyed me reprovingly. "About what that peasant has just told you?"

"Nicolai," said I, "I have a wretched memory. . . . I have entirely forgotten what he came to see me about."

"All right!" said Nicolai and laughed. . . .

CHAPTER XXV

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CENSOR

MY DEAR CENSOR,

I wonder if you are the pretty girl with the blue eyes and the smiling dimples whom I once saw when I visited your office in Petrograd? You were sitting on a mail bag smoking a cigarette. A soldier asked me what I wanted. I said I wanted to see the Censor of the English letters. You looked up at me and your blue eyes shone, and you blew out a narrow cloud of smoke from your pretty mouth. Do you remember? And the soldier went away—and ever so many old officers passed us in the outer room—and then the man came and told me that the chief of the department was engaged. So I had to go away without seeing him. But, really, it was not he whom I wished to see. The person I wanted was the one who cut bits out of the letters I wrote home, and crossed out bits in the letters I received from England: who collected photographs that were addressed to me, and, generally, did the most annoying things. I wonder if it was you?—or someone like you? I hardly like to think so, because I have called the Censor very dreadful names, such as I would never use to any lady, blue eyes and dimples or not. We say the “enemy” here: and the enemy is an unknown quantity. Not as regards numbers, but as regards personality. We say the “Censor”; and the “Censor” is a limited company, too. And just as each enemy soldier is hated because he is of the opposing side, so each one of you who read our letters and our private

notes must be blamed because you, collectively, make up the disliked Power that we call "Censor"—and that we, as I have said, call other names besides.

It is a pleasure to write to you, Miss Censor, because for the first time in nearly three years I know that all I write will be read by the one to whom it is written. That other people will be allowed to read this letter depends, of course, on you. But I think you might let them read it—just for a change. You have read so many other people's letters that it would be a little reciprocation on your part if you allowed, for once, the other people to read a very personal letter of your own. I will certainly say some things that you may not like, but I have also written about your prettiness, so that ought to even things up a little. One can forgive a girl anything if she has blue eyes and dimples : and you will forgive me in that I make this known.

I have made an estimate of the number of letters written to me by relatives and friends in 1915. I have made a very modest estimate, allowing for forgetfulness and laziness and procrastination, but one based on what letters I actually received, most of which referred to previous notes sent to me. And I find this—that in the nine months from April to December inclusive, at least a hundred and fifty letters were sent to me from England. Do you know how many I actually received, Miss Censor ? Guess You cannot ? Well, then, I will tell you. Twenty-nine. What have you got to say to that ? And do you know how I received them ? Like this : Three months without a single one, then suddenly a batch of seven or eight. Then two months without any—and then another half-dozen. German submarines perhaps accounted for the loss of over a hundred of my hundred and fifty letters in nine months : also perhaps not, Miss Censor. But German submarines are not to blame for eight letters of dates spreading over three months arriving at the same time. You say that probably I was shifting about all the time with the army and that of course the letters could not possibly reach me quickly when my army address was changing every day ? But I am allowing for all that. I am telling of the receipt of letters at my Petro-

grad address—and not at the Front, where, of course, delays are quite excusable.

The following year, 1916, was somewhat better, I received probably thirty per cent. of the correspondence addressed to me. That is a decided improvement on a percentage of 19·8. But most of my letters were over two months old by the time they reached my address in town: and at least ten weeks old by the time they reached me at the Front. One letter—a registered one—posted to me from London on the 18th of November, 1915, arrived in Petrograd on April 18, 1916. This letter was intended to reach me at Christmas: it arrived on my birthday instead, which was very nice, wasn't it? Lots of other quicker arrivals have come to me after being four months en route. However, better late than never—that is an English proverb—so I do not grumble very much at these delays.

But oh! Miss Censor, the things you do! This same letter that left London on November 18 referred to the lack of news from me. By the way, I had written home on an average of six times each month. . . . This passage occurred in the letter: "We heard fairly regularly from you when you were in Poland, but since you wrote at the beginning of August, just before the fall of Warsaw, we have only received three letters." Nothing much of military importance in that letter: no secrets, Miss Censor. Yet your copying ink pencil had crossed out the word "Warsaw"! Did you want me, who had escaped from the town at the last minute, to remain in ignorance of its fall? Or did you want to prevent the information from reaching the Germans? Or—but I cannot think of any other reasons for the word's obliteration. In 1916, also, I received two letters from my mother. Very nice letters, Miss Censor, with only personal news, hopes for my safety, love, and so on. But do you remember what you did? You crossed out all marks of punctuation! You crossed out "secret codes" like "?" and "!" and "“”" and "„" and ":" and "(" and "—". The things I said! . . . well, I have censored them myself, and so I cannot write them down. But perhaps you would like to see one censored

remark? I will write it, just to show the futility of censoring single words. "Well I'll be —," I said. "Of all the — foolishness, this is the — limit!"

I received one letter in 1915 in which was this sentence: "I am sending you in this letter a snapshot of myself taken in the garden last week." But there was no photograph in the letter I received. In 1916, another sentence said, "I enclose a photograph of Ito and Bob playing on the lawn in front of the house." Ito and Bob are my dogs, as you must have known if you looked at the print. But you did not allow me to have it. Indeed, considering only the few letters I actually received, you have confiscated the following property intended for me: Four photographs of my mother, two photographs of my dogs, one family group, and five others, none of which were mounted and none of which could possibly have concealed secret messages. Why you annexed my dogs—you and you alone can tell. The big one, as you know, is a sort of English sheep-dog—he is a cross between a sheep-dog and an Airedale—and the little one is a Japanese spaniel. One English, the other Japanese. Both Allies. But perhaps you fell in love with them? . . . I cannot blame you if you did.

You made an awful mess of some of the magazines and newspapers I received. The greasy ink you used soaked through other pages of the paper and made other passages apart from the ones inked out difficult to read. And that sand that you sprinkled on the wet oily ink to dry it annoyed me intensely. We called it "caviare" here. I used to read in bed, and the sand used to fall on my pyjamas and find its way through to my skin. A most unpleasant matter. Of course, you systematically blacked out all the German official reports. But in England we always publish them. And English folk here, for whom the papers came, like the English folk at home, know very well that the German reports are usually fairy tales. In England we read them with amusement. No one is the least depressed at the German tales of victory. The Jutland Battle, for instance, seen through German eyes, appeared to be the overwhelming defeat of the English Fleet. But our fleet remained at sea, and

our ports remained open, and our merchant ships went on their business, while the German warships returned once more to their prison in the Kiel Canal. To digress for a moment, let me tell you of a very excellent comment I read in an American paper which reached me after many months. "The German Navy," the comment ran, "is a navy in prison. It has attacked its jailer with great fury—but it still remains in prison." That, of course, is by the way. Perhaps I have not quoted the exact words, as I am writing from memory, but that is the gist of the comment.

In the beginning of 1917 you inked out the photo of Rasputin, but not the text underneath. Why? . . . Everybody in Russia knew that such a blackguard existed. It was no secret. The Germans, too, knew more about him and his doings than we shall ever know. Oh! Miss Censor!—I cannot follow all your reasoning, for do you know what you did? You blacked out Rasputin in one English journal and let him appear uninked in another, and months before you allowed a severe criticism of him to appear in the "*Times*' History of the War." What a contrary little lady you are!

I will tell you some other things you did. A letter reached me with one sentence like this: "A — visited us the other night. Very little damage was done. Folks here are remarkably calm, although, as is to be expected, there are always a few nervous people." In some of the English journals there used to be "Missing Word" competitions. Sentences such as that I have written were given, and one had to supply the words that were left out. But no sentences with missing words were ever so easy as the one above!—except, perhaps, those of the first two weeks of the competition, when the easiest possible phrases were printed as a sort of bait. The Germans knew that the Zeppelin had sailed to England: and we in Russia knew it too, for the English papers that we received told of its visit, and the Russian papers, too, had announced the news some weeks earlier. I think I know why you crossed out "Warsaw" and "Zeppelin." I think, perhaps, there must have been an order prohibiting the mention of places and dates and military particulars,

so that when you saw a town mentioned you crossed it out at once, and when you saw "Zeppelin" you crossed it out, too. But I do not think you troubled to read the rest of the letter. You looked for proper names, and cut them out, and so the innocent suffered with the guilty. And sometimes you cut out words which appeared in sentences which had nothing to do with the war. Perhaps the writing was bad and you could not decipher them : perhaps you did not understand their meaning ; and so, perhaps, you decided to err safely. However, I cannot grumble very much at these doings of yours. They amused me. And, anyhow, half a letter is better than no news.

What you did to the letters I wrote home I cannot say, I do know that only about forty per cent. of those I ever wrote reached England. In what condition I do not know. I can say this much to-day—that I never once wrote a letter without having you in my mind. And if you ever found my notes dull, you have only your own self to blame. I could have made my correspondence very much more interesting than it was. I could have told you lots of interesting incidents and little thrilling stories to entertain you in that dull, inky, sandy, gummy room in Petrograd. But I was afraid of you. So what did I write instead ? You must know : but perhaps you have forgotten ? With the exception of a few letters of considerable length, I wrote the very scrappiest notes. I wrote that I was well—or that I was ill : that the weather was fine, or that it was bad : that I had had dinner at the Staff, or that some Staff Officers had had dinner with me : and I nearly always wrote that I had no more news to tell, that I yearned to be home again, and that I sent much love to all. And I used to write at the top of the letter, "No War News," and also "Rien sur la guerre," in case the lady who censored my letters did not understand English.

Do you know, Miss Censor, that I have envied you many times, apart from the fact that you received all my correspondence from home and I did not. I envied you the opportunities you had of studying human nature, of reading real life dramas—comedies and tragedies. I envied you the secrets that you must

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have read. And I envied you your power. You raised your pencil and words died. You said the word and letters were destroyed. Men might write and editors might accept and publishers might print, but at a word from you the greasy ink and drying sand would be applied that readers might not read. Your pencil was more powerful than our pens.

Do you know what I think this war has shown us very clearly? The Victory of the Lie. The lie has triumphed: the truth has been suppressed. That well where Truth is supposed to be has been filled up with official reports and notices and public rumours—with a Censor sitting grimly on the top and a screaming band of little lies playing jing-a-ring around him. Truth, according to the Censor's definition, is something one must not write. One can write a part of it, but not all. Last year, 1916, for instance, one could write that Soukhomlinov had been War Minister; but one was not allowed to write that there had been no shells. Both statements were absolutely true—the latter because of the former. Soukhomlinov was: shells were not. Cause and effect. . . . One was permitted to say that Warsaw had fallen and that the Russian army had made a great retreat: but one was not allowed to say that many Russian soldiers had died and that many Russian soldiers had been wounded. And so you prohibited a book of mine from coming into Russia—and you would not even let me, who had written it, have a copy!

Well, well. . . . We have a free Russia now, and I hear talk of a free Press and of free speech and of free opinion, and so forth. But I wonder, Miss Censor. . . . A year ago you let us see and show the Tsar's head on the rouble, but not the other side. To-day we see the eagle side, but we do not see the other. . . . That is a figure of speech! Of course we do not see any metal money at all! Only these dirty stamps and rouble notes. Really, I am surprised that the paper money—the 10, 15 and 20 kopeck stamps—has not been censored too! Of course you know that soldiers have reversed their medals so that the late emperor's head is hidden? Freedom of the Press? Yet you even refused to let me have

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some English papers addressed to me that referred to the Revolution! . . . Why? But it is no use asking you. You will not answer me.

I wonder, Miss Censor, if you are the pretty girl with the blue eyes and the smiling dimples whom I once saw when I visited your office in Petrograd? . . . If so—well, what a pretty enemy I have had! If you are one of those old officers I saw—Damn you! . . . But no! Pardon me. I am sure you are a lady. For no mere man could ever be quite so contrary as you have been. No mere man could ever be so cruel. And—but there are some things I cannot write, even to the Censor. . . .

CHAPTER XXVI

SMOKE PICTURES

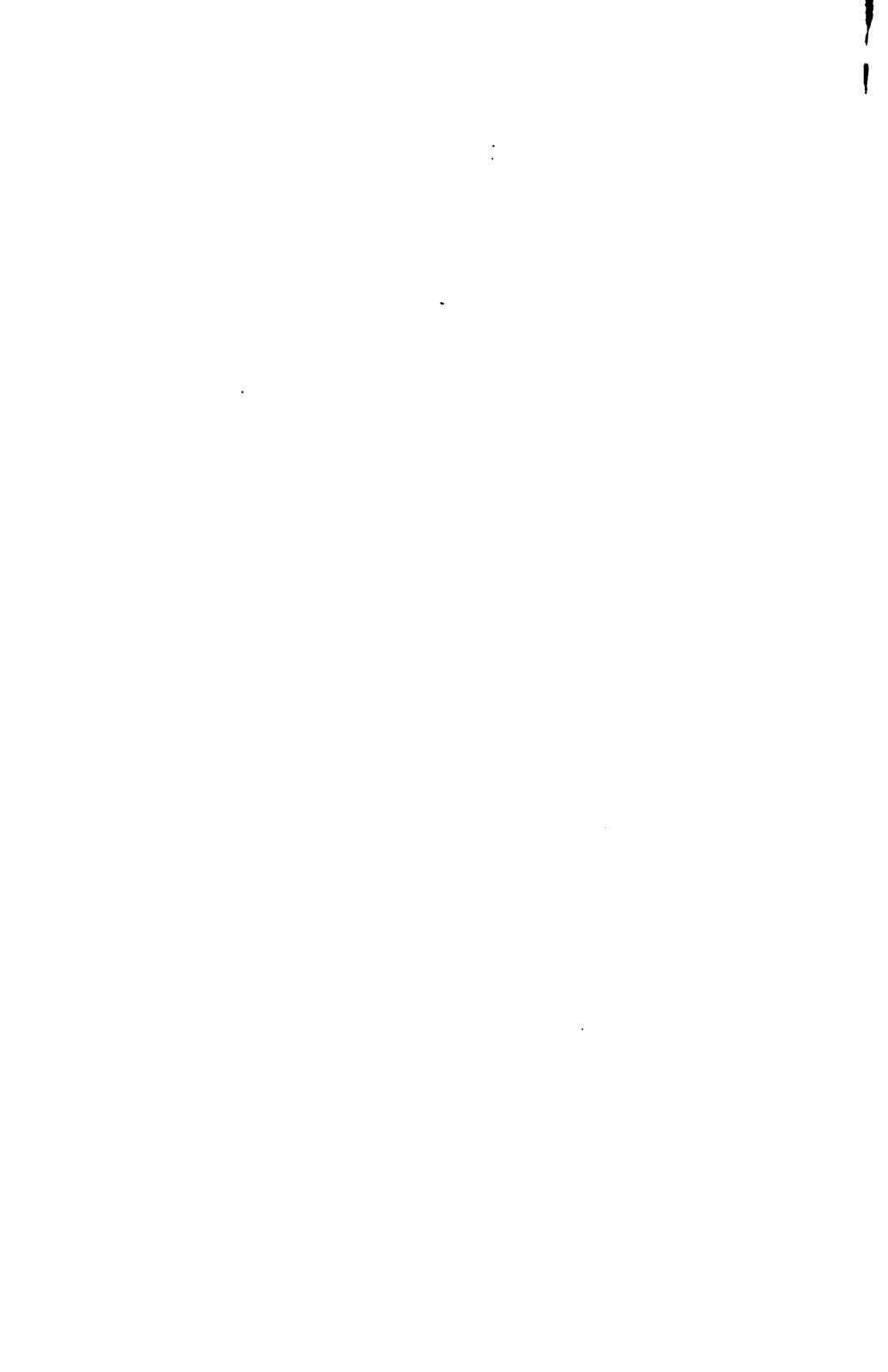
SPRING came—the third spring of the war. The Cheremucha bushes were in bloom. The flowers were like white lilac. In the woods were other white flowers that opened out by day and shut their eyes at night. Violets, too, in hollows or nestling at the foot of trees. The marshes were yellow with buttercups. And all the woods and boggy ground stirred with insect life. Birds, also, accustomed to the war, sang merrily in the trees. The cuckoo—the Russian word is “Koo-kooshka”—cuckooed. At evening on the broad flat pools that lay upon the plains one saw wild ducks swimming slowly on the calm water. Frogs croaked in steady monotone from the water’s edge. Hearing them night after night I formed a theory of how they make the noise. They fill their big wide mouths with water, I think, then gaze up to the sky and gargle. . . . Geese honked overhead after the sun had set—arrow-shaped flights of geese that flew high in the sky. Nightingales sang. I like that word “nightingale.” The Russian word, too, is very pretty—“Solovei” The days and nights but for the birds and frogs were very calm.

In early summer we moved to tents, leaving the safety of our bomb-proof huts. I write in my cool tent now. The floor is uncovered. The grass is already trampled down except in the corners and by the edges of the tent’s sides. I have a trestle bed. It is narrow and low, only a foot and a half in height. I have a folding table made of yellow varnished pine. I have a small camp stool to match. It is much steadier than most stools are: and much more convenient than a chair. A larger table has a map fastened to



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it with drawing pins. I know the zig-zag red-ink line by heart. There is a hieroglyphic sign that marks the place where I am now. . . . There is a mirror, remnant of a former dressing-case, hanging to the end tent pole. Beneath it is an empty sugar box. On this a tin enamelled basin stands. My kit bags stand on slabs of pine to keep them free from damp. They are convenient for travelling, these bags : they are not so good when one is settled down. But I have found a most convenient place for clothes—under the thin mattress at the pillow end of my bed. They are easy to get at there, and the pillow by itself is somewhat low. . . . In the centre of my tent is a tin stove. The chimney, made of tin sections, juts out through a hole in the canvas roof. The joints of these sections are sealed with clay. At present my orderly, Grigorie, lights a fire each night. We burn wood only. There is peat to be had for the cutting, but wood already cut lies nearer home. The enemy saves us much work.

Outside, amongst the trees, my men are also camped in tents. These tents are big and round. Each holds thirty men. The horses are tethered in the open too. They stand in long lines sheltered by the trees. Our wagons stand close to the forest's edge. When evening comes the men light wood fires in the open. The pungent smoke smells very nice. When it is dark I see the soldiers sitting there, their faces lit up with the red fire's glow. Always they sing, very quietly the folk songs of "Little Russia." One man plays a concertina. He plays it very well. There is a tenor who sings beautifully. His favourite song—and mine, I think—is of chrysanthemums that grew in a city garden. . . . "Faded Chrysanthemums," it is called. This is the translation :

In the garden where we used to meet
Your favourite flower, the Chrysanthemum, was blooming :
And then in my soul opened the flower of love. . . .

The park is now deserted : You went away long ago.
Quite depressed I roam alone and involuntary tears fall fast
Over a faded branch of chrysanthemums.

The chrysanthemums faded long ago in the park,
But love lives on in my deeply wounded heart. . . .

The melody is beautiful. The man sings softly : one hears the sorrow in his voice. The other men hum a quiet accompaniment . . . And the setting ! . . . Can you see it ? . . . A dark wood : a glowing camp fire—yellow and red, with the smoke showing brownish-grey above the glow. The evening breeze makes the flames flicker from time to time. A thin spray of sparks ascends fountain-wise. . . . The men sitting or lying on the ground. They wear their grey coats like capes. And all is calm. The artillery is silent. There is not a sound from the trenches. . . . Now and again one hears a horse whinney. Now and again one hears the rumble of a passing wagon. Over our lines the rival rockets burst and light up No Man's Land. But one hears no sound. It is very still.

And, somehow, when night comes and when I see these red wood fires and smell the delightful incense of the burning wood, I find the sad songs are the songs I want to hear. Faded chrysanthemums—and autumn will soon be here again. Town parks and garden plots. Men die—and flowers fade—but flowers all live with us again. And I sit in the cool night air beside my tent door and smoke my pipe. An oil lamp throws out a little patch of light so that I do not smoke untasting in the dark. And I think of—oh ! so many things ! London and Surrey and the river Thames. . . . Restaurants and theatres and golf links and green tennis lawns. . . . Faces I see, too—faces in the smoke. . . . My friends who died in France and in the Dardanelles. . . . That brings me to the war. I see a hundred pictures once again. . . .

II

A long white greyish road across a plain. It is dark. The sun has set : as yet there is no moon. A cool night wind is chilling the warm earth. Towards the west, along the horizon, dull red glows light up the sky. A straggling regiment of men is marching on towards the east. The soldiers stumble on with heads bent down as though beneath their load of kit. Their rifles with the long thin bayonets rest on their backs,

the straps slung on the left shoulders of the men. These Russian soldiers do not march as other soldiers do. They shuffle. They do not march in any military form. They hurry on in single file or else in twos and threes, some at one side of the road, some at the other. They are very tired. They have not slept, save for an hour or two, for many nights. Some doze—it is the truth—some doze as they shuffle along. Long days of fighting against overwhelming odds—bayonets against artillery: long weary night-time marches of fifty versts and more: the trenches they must make when morning comes: and the hopelessness, I was about to write—their faith is much too great for that.

A blue-black night lit by a yellow full round moon. A railway station by a forest's edge. Four thousand wounded men. The station buffet is an operating chamber. The floors are wet and slippery. The other rooms are dressing points. There is a sickening smell of chemicals. Lint and stained bandages overflow from pails and bins. The broad tiled platform is carpeted with straw, the bedding for these broken men. They lie out in the open. There is a dampness in the air. The tiles are damp. The straw in places does not cover them. One hears groaning on all sides—but only from the men who are asleep. The other men are stoics in their suffering. We have been told to leave this place because the enemy is near. A day or two—perhaps to-morrow—the enemy will come. But there are not trains enough to take all injured men. We have already had ten thousand wounded in two days. . . . A long line of ambulances fetches other wounded to our point. Even ambulances are not enough. Peasants' carts have been requisitioned for the work. They unload their wounded and they rumble off again.

Another night of bluish-black. The German guns are thundering. I see their flash light up the sky. I see the orange spurts above our lines where shrapnel shells are bursting. I see the rockets—German ones with steady light: Russian ones that burst firework-like into stars. I hear the moan and scream of the shells' flight. I hear the rifle volleys and the staccato stammer

of the maxim-guns. I hear a horse's whinney, the rumbling of wagon wheels, and men's voices in the dark. I see the army carts, but dimly. I see the foals that run by their mothers' sides. I see the glow of a travelling kitchen upon the surface of the road, and the white steam from its boilers. A gun's flash—and I see the men on horseback silhouetted for a second's fraction against the sky. I see shadowy forms of soldiers hurrying by on foot.

A canvas tent upon the open plain. The wind is billowing out the sides. The oil-lit lantern is flickering in the draught. The floor is carpeted with a tarpaulin sheet. There are stretchers placed in a circle round the sides, and in lines in the centre. Most of them are occupied. A little Sister, tired with many hours of work, is sleeping in a chair beside an unlit stove. The lantern casts shadows on her face. A sanitar smokes numerous cigarettes and paces like a sentry up and down. He pulls a rug around this man, much as a mother pulls a blanket round the shoulders of a sleeping child. He gives a drink to that. He hunkers down and whispers softly to a third. He has great strong arms, this sanitar, but one hand has three fingers missing. The stumps are purplish-red. He is a big, gentle fellow with a tender heart. He knows what battles are! He knows the pain of bullet wounds. . . . A cart comes rumbling to the door. The driver purrs out—"Pr-r-r-r-r-r-r!" to his horse. It is the Russian sound for "whoa!" The big sanitar goes out and carries in another man in his arms and places him carefully on a vacant stretcher. There is something feminine in his gentle handling of the wounded men. . . . The noise of guns is continuous. The report—the whistle—and the bursting bang. . . . The canvas door flaps in the wind. The Sister sleeps. The sanitar smokes and paces up and down. . . .

An autumn day upon an upland plain. Down in the valley is a clump of trees. The leaves are golden, yellow, russet red. A great camp lies beside a railway line. Army stores are there in stacks—hay and straw and bags of corn and *kasha*: great loaves of black bread

in heaps. A company of cavalry is resting nearby. The horses stand untethered. They are tired. They will not run away. The men sit in groups. Some of them are sleeping on the ground, their saddles for their pillows. Red Cross tents are dotted here and there. Also there are large wooden buildings for the wounded men. A barbed wire fence runs round one lazaret. Here are men with fever and infectious diseases. This place is "out of bounds" Before the tents the slightly wounded men sit or walk slowly in the open air. . . . There is the boom of nearby guns. The reports are like half-stifled barks. Shrapnel clouds come in the sky. One looks—one strains one's eyes—and then one sees a pale brown, shining aeroplane. It comes nearer and nearer. One is foolish to stay in the open. There are bomb-proof shelters, but, fascinated, one watches the machine come. The guns cease firing. The aeroplane is just above the camp. It circles for a minute or two, then there is the "Ssh. . . . Ssh SSH—" of a falling bomb. A great explosion: and a cloud of earth is thrown up from the ground. One rushes to the spot. Only a hole is in the earth, but, nearly a hundred yards away, a man lies with his head cut in two. One runs to look at him. No one speaks. One simply looks. . . . Then one searches for some fragments of the bomb. They are hot—one can scarcely hold them. . . . The dead man wears a dark blue dressing-gown. His arm is bound in bandages. Another week, perhaps, and he would have been well enough to go back to the lines. The Red Cross doctor calmly smokes his cigarette. He alters an entry in his books. . . . Two men go off with spades towards the valley.

A cabaret in Moscow. A crowded, well-lit place. Plush hangings and much gold-work on white paint. The tables are all occupied. Officers, certainly: and women: and a surprising amount of young men in civil dress. Everyone is laughing and chatting merrily. Scantly clad dancers jump about the stage. Others sing to an audience that does not listen. No one pays much attention to the artistes. Wine is served in bottles labelled "Lemonade." Vodka—an imitation

vodka made of pure alcohol and water—is served in cups : so is cognac. The prices are very high, but that does not matter. The drink's the thing. There is total prohibition—unless, well—there are ways and means : chiefly means. A red-coated Italian orchestra at the back of the room plays during the stage *entr'actes*. The musicians play guitars and mandolines : also two men sing merry songs, snapping their fingers rag-time wise. By one side of the room, behind a trellis work covered with imitation vines, a choir of dark-skinned gypsies sits. Their appearance on the stage will be the closing act. Meanwhile, they sit and yawn and look bored. Later on when their performance is over, they will walk around the promenade at the back and beg for cab fares and for money gifts. Some are very pretty : others are somewhat wrinkled and *passées*. The elder women wear medals gained by singing prowess in the past. . . . Cigarette smoke and the smoke from fat cigars. A negro in a morning coat passes amongst the tables. He wears great rings on his fingers. He shakes hands with his regular clients. They seem delighted to be on terms of intimacy with the proprietor. It ensures them alcohol, they think : but anyone who likes to pay can have all he requires. At two o'clock a bell is rung, but no one troubles to go home for quite an hour after the legal closing time. The negro proprietor is not afraid. The police, no doubt, are his friends. Every man there has his price. Profits from wine and alcohol, thanks to their total prohibition, are very big. The artistes' salaries, too, must be very low. . . .

A fenced-off space where dead men rest. The crosses are new, and decked with leaves and branches. There are other posts there with crescents nailed on top, where some dead Mohammedans lie. Also plain posts with neither cross nor crescent mark the graves of fallen Jews or of men without religion. Pencilled epitaphs are on the wood. Fellow soldiers have written a few words there. Crude verse, too. . . . Some graves have elaborate wreaths hanging from the crosses. These wreaths are made of flowers and leaves culled from the fields and woods, but the foundation is a circle

of barbed-wire. Other wire is scarcer at the Front. . . . Some soldiers walk bare-headed from grave to grave. They read the pencilled names, the clumsy epitaphs. Perhaps they search for graves of comrades. . . . They cross themselves. They walk slowly to the gate. They light their cigarettes, then mount their horses and go off towards the battle line. They sing loudly. I can only guess why. . . .

III

Cinematograph-like, a reel of pictures runs across my mind. Some I see as pleasant memories. Certain Polish woods and lakes : heather moors and autumn colourings : great patches of birch trees that make a curious effect of black and white : cheremucha bushes by the edge of sun-lit streams, shedding a heavy perfume on the air : some men : the faces of some women. . . . Others are awesome views of war, but there is something magnificent about them. The marching of singing men towards the trenches. The evening parades when men line up to pray. . . . The flashes of the guns : the lights of rockets : the shrapnel's bursting flame at night. The day-time trenches of two years ago ; the spurts of earth where bullets struck ; the dug-outs where men huddled, hearts beating quickly, when a shell's moaning whistle came. . . . Our aeroplanes above the German lines, sailing through thick shoals of black-brown shrapnel clouds ; their aeroplanes above our lines — sailing through thin shoals of white shrapnel puffs of smoke. One knew the enemy's shrapnel by the brown smoke and by the prodigality of the number : our shrapnel smoke was white, and also very scarce.

Other memories are terrible. I cannot shake them from my mind. Dead men that I have seen, and worse still, wounded men. Men and earth and wood all mixed up in a heap. Horses and men and carts that have been smashed at one shell's bursting. Refugees who died of exhaustion by the wayside. Peasant children wounded and crippled for all time. Towns wrecked by guns : small villages burned down by fire.

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Long queues of hungry, homeless folk lined up to get a scanty meal. Lost children whose parents would never find them again.

We did little in 1916 and in the early months of 1917. We did not even mark time. We stood at ease. Occasionally there was a slight enemy attack, but very seldom was our rest disturbed. . . . We had our days of pessimism. We waited for the opportunities that never came. Sometimes—sometimes we lost hope.

But, thank God, we did not have to undergo again the horrors that we had in tragic 1915.

CHAPTER XXVII

“ COMRADE HUN ”

News travels very fast to Germany. The day following the arrest of Protopopov, Soukhomlinov, Stürmer and Co., a large notice was displayed from the German trenches :—

“ YOUR MINISTERS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED ! ”

This was meant as a taunt, or a sneer at the Russians, but they were equal to the occasion.

“ NOT OURS—BUT YOURS ! ”

was the triumphant answering display.

The Germans carried on the war with words. Aeroplanes dropped pamphlets telling the Russians what the Germans thought of England. “ Behold now—your FIEND, ENGLAND ! ” the various proclamations said. They told of cunning and of evil plots : of England’s greed and wickedness and vice ; of England’s wish to ward off peace so that her poor Allies would all be lost, and England would be left standing jeeringly from out the ruins that she had caused. The pamphlets, which, of course, were printed in Russian, also said that the dear, beloved Tsar of Russia had fallen as a victim to English cunning : that England wished to hold him as hostage for the acquisition of ransom in the shape of Russian territory and that Russians should awake to this fact and have nothing to do with such a fiend as England was These pamphlets were wonderful grim fairy tales.

The following incident happened on April 14, 1917, on the middle Western Russian Front. A Russian officer second-lieutenant of the 165th Regiment, of the

42nd Division, Second Russian Army, saw one of his sergeants make his way unarmed towards the German lines. The officer suspected that a plot of some sort was on foot. He determined that the sergeant should not speak to the Germans except in his presence, and that whatever the Germans had to say to the sergeant they must say to him, the second-lieutenant, as well. So he very bravely left his trench and reached a point between the lines, screened from attack, where he found two German officers greeting the Russian sergeant. One of these Germans was a young man named Waldermann—formerly a student in Petrograd: no doubt formerly a spy. He spoke Russian perfectly. He congratulated the Russians on their freedom, told them that now they must leave off fighting and put their house in order, and finally assured them that Russia had Germany to thank for her freedom, for without the war the Revolution would not have been! This last statement was also issued in pamphlet form by the Germans. They who had sworn for over thirty months that they were innocent, that England alone had started and prolonged the war (without England the war, no doubt, would have finished earlier, so there was a little truth in the German statement!) that England, the "Fiend," had forced poor Germany to take up arms, etc., etc., etc.—they who had sworn all that now had the shameless impudence and audacity to say, "We started the war and because of that you Russians have your freedom. So thank us and realise that we indeed are your best friends!"

There is much to laugh at in this fact. There is much of the ludicrous. But—alas!—there is tragedy, too. Many, many Russian soldiers believed the German stories of virtue and friendship. They believed that the Germans wished for peace because of their warm affection for Russia. . . . And many, many Russian soldiers immediately accepted the Hun as their comrade.

It may seem incredible that Russian soldiers at this time went frequently as guests to the German trenches, and that the Germans came to the Russian lines—and saw all that they wished to see. It may seem incredible that an *entente* existed between the two sides—the Russians simple and trusting, the Germans

cunning and treacherous. But these are facts. This visiting and *entente* actually occurred. The Russians on their visits to the enemy were given vodka and other alcoholic drinks. Then they were questioned as to the location of reserves, munitions, and artillery. The Germans easily persuaded some of the simple and gullible Russian men that they were the real friends of Russia and doubtless the drink given to the guests further loosened their tongues.

One of the results of such a visit took place on the 8th of May (April 25, Russian date) on the Baranovitchi Front. The villages of Lotva and Liakhovitch were heavily bombarded by the German artillery. Finally they were set on fire and completely destroyed. The Russian losses, officially announced (and I have reason to believe that these do not include the losses of the peasant population; many still remained in their villages sharing their houses with the soldiers) were nine men killed, thirty-five wounded, one man suffering from shell shock, and, up to the 8th of May inclusive, thirty-five missing—probably lost in the burning cottages. Material losses included two ambulance wagons, three wagons containing chemicals and medicaments, one cooking wagon, two workshops where rifles were repaired, 75,000 clips of cartridges, 1,247 rifles, 400 picks, 500 barbed-wire cutters, and other effects.

Following this bombardment was an inquiry. It was then found that one of the soldiers of the 20th G—— Regiment, when on a visit to the German lines near the village of Zubelevitch, had spoken freely of the location of the Russian reserves and material. The Russian soldiers and the Germans had held a meeting and this foolish man had said that the 20th G—— Regiment lived at Liakhovitch. He also told where the maxim-gun stores and reserves were kept, and, generally, made the enemy acquainted with that which the Russian authorities had tried to keep secret.

On the same day that this bombardment took place, a Russian officer, overheard, by accident, a conversation between a Russian soldier and a Russian artilleryman. The former asked specially that the artillery men should refuse to fire that day because "the Germans will be on a visit to our trenches" and their Russian

hosts were anxious that their crossing should be quite safe.

This is only one of the many episodes that occurred. Even German officers visited the Russian men and hostilities ceased while they told their lies to the Russians—and got what information they required. It was an impossible state of affairs. And how treacherous the Germans were! . . . I saw a wounded man in May in the Iverski Field Hospital, when on a visit to a doctor acquaintance. This man had, with other Russians, been on a visit to their Comrades, the Huns. On their returning across the open to their own lines the Germans fired on them. . . . North of us, on the Dvinsk Front, six hundred balloons of gas were received by one Russian regiment. Then came a formidable wind. The commander ordered an attack with gas. The soldiers refused—*on the ground that it was too brutal!* . . . The wind changed next day and the Germans fired gas shells against the tender-hearted regiment. . . .

A special Army Order was issued prohibiting the Russian soldiers from visiting or entertaining the Germans. But even after this came news of an extraordinary occurrence that had taken place. . . . I have not written anything except what was freely discussed on the Russian Front—news that was practically “public property.” But in this particular case I will quote the Official Order issued by the General Commanding the armies on the Western Russian Front, on the 6th of June. I do not wish to take advantage of my position, but I wish to show how extraordinarily simple the Russian soldier is—because I wish to show how very difficult it was to deal with him and what a very anxious, trying time his officers had.

“Order of the General Commanding the armies on the Western Front. Taken prisoner of war, a German soldier of the 150th Cyclist Company related that already for two months an exchange trade had taken place on German initiative between the Russian and the German soldiers with bread, soap and sugar, the Russians receiving in exchange watches, knives, purses, razors and cigars. The Russian bread and sugar are valued by the Germans extremely low and demands are made

for additional payment of money as well. This barter takes place in the Russian trenches and near the Russian barbed-wire barriers. The greatest quantity of products is received by the Germans placed near the Russian field sentries. Bread is supplied (to the enemy) in a considerable quantity, approximately half the rations issued to the Russian soldiers, which makes it possible for the German army to endure more easily the acute alimentary crisis. Our officers are against this barter but the German commanders in every way endeavour to attain their aim of nourishing their soldiers. An account of this fact having been communicated to the Commanding General, General Garko underlines that it can bring about ruin in the army, and calls it treachery to Russia—this barter in whatever bread and sugar may be of use to the needy nation which has given its last crumbs to the army.

"Come, soldiers, remember your native land, your families, fathers, mothers and children! Limiting themselves to the most indispensable necessaries of life, they give all that there may be plenty at the Front.

"In conclusion, the Commander-in-Chief expresses the confidence that the military committees will draw attention to this unpardonable phenomenon, and that they will use all their authority to prevent this treacherous intercourse with the enemy. I order that whosoever will be detected in this treachery be handed over to a judge and that he be treated with the utmost severity."

The Russian soldiers were not criminals. They were simply—simple. Even in 1915, when they were suffering so terribly from the attacks of the enemy, they threw lumps of bread towards the German trenches, because the Germans cried out that they had no food. . . . But what an exasperating simplicity theirs was!

• • • On the 6th of May (April 23, Russian date) to the lines held by the 151st Piatigorski Infantry Regiment, 38th Army Division, came a German Colonel who asked to be allowed to go to the Russian General Staff. The Russian commander refused his request. The German then stated that he wished to speak with the Commander of the Corps, then with the Commander of the Army, and then he wished to be allowed to go to Petrograd.

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But of what he wished to speak he did not tell. On the Russian regiment commander refusing to permit the German Colonel to go to the various staffs, the soldiers of the regiment were displeased—and showed their displeasure.

General Alexiev issued an Army Order on the 12th of May (29th April) referring to what he called a "sad occasion." "Even I, the Commander-in-Chief of all the Russian Armies, am not able to discuss peace with German Colonels," he wrote. "Any officer who enters into such negotiations is a traitor to his country. Only the Ministers are able to talk of peace," he said. "They and they alone know, with the consent of the whole Russian nation, when and how we must end the war. And the terms of peace will not be discussed with German Colonel-negotiators, but with diplomats of the highest authority. "The Germans know this very well, but they send their negotiators to spy out the Russian trenches, to see the disposition of the troops, and to encourage the *provokators* to stir up discord. . . .

"If the German fiend really wished peace, he knows how and through what channels he can speak with our Ministers. But he does not speak with the Ministers. He does not wish peace : he wishes to see the arrangement of our trenches, to upset your faith in your commanders and to spread more dreams of an early peace. Awake ! Peace can only come when we are victorious over the fiend. The native land expects that we will give all for that victory.

"Believe in your commanders as your chief friends, loving the soldiers and living the same life at the Front as they do.

"Woe to the army that does not trust its commanders. . . ."

"*Slava Bogu !*"—"Glory be to God !" as they say in Russia, the Division to which I was attached remained comparatively tranquil and loyal to their country. But our neighbouring Division to the south caused much trouble. One regiment, the 518th, encouraged by a few *provokators* and by the outpourings of Lenin & Co., refused to go to the trenches. . . . Another regiment actually left their position in the front trench

and set off for the nearest railway station, carrying with them their rifles and their ammunition. They returned to their trench after their officers had pleaded earnestly with them. The Germans could have strolled across to the Russian lines that day and taken possession of these vacant trenches without firing a shot—but they were much too clever. Any move on their part would have brought the Russian men back, eager to fight, much quicker than all the prayers of the Russian officers. . . . I do not explain this phenomenon, but it is true. If you ever chance to see a man beating his wife, and if you go to her rescue and very properly commence to trounce the brutal husband—*beware of the wife!* . . . Men of the —th Regiment, adjoining ours, on seeing one of our men shoot a German who suddenly left his own trench, threatened to attack our men if they continued to fire against the enemy.

On the 18th of May, a Russian doctor, a friend of mine, came to see me. He was very depressed. He was in charge of a hundred military sanitars. The previous day a special deputation had approached him on behalf of the rest of the men. On the excuse that they were "lonely" and somewhat "bored" with war, they asked for wine and pure alcohol (the latter to make vodka—equal portions of alcohol and water). Of course the doctor refused.

"If you do not give us wine and vodka we will help ourselves," the men declared.

The doctor spoke very severely to them and threatened them with heavy punishment should such a theft take place. The men went away in anger and defiance, but they made no attempt to confiscate the wine and spirit, of which the doctor had a considerable quantity—red wine for the sick and wounded, spirit for medicinal purposes.

The doctor went to consult a staff officer. He asked what steps should be taken in the event of the soldiers carrying out their threats.

"Of course," said the doctor, "I can shoot the foremost man—possibly the first six, but after that I will be powerless. . . ."

The staff officer looked grave, then suddenly he brightened up.

"It is not so very difficult a matter after all," he said. "Indeed it is very simple. If the men ask again for wine and spirit—give them what they want! . . ."

Our own division was comparatively quiet, but still there was a certain amount of discontent and trouble. The daily talk was of a separate peace. . . . There had been an army order that every detachment and regiment and lazaret should cultivate a kitchen garden or potato and cabbage fields for the supply of vegetables for its own use. In the event of an important advance some lucky peasants would reap the harvest : in the event of a slight advance, another company—lazaret or reserve regiment—would be the gainer : and—but no one thought of a retreat. We might not advance—certainly we would not go back.

My own men certainly worked in the field I had marked out, but they worked very unwillingly because, said they, it is foolish to sow what one can never reap. Peace (this was in the first week in May) would be declared in a few weeks and potatoes would require a few months to grow and ripen.

I rode one morning to the field they were cultivating : it was some little distance away. I found the men setting potatoes. . . . There had been a Committee meeting the previous night and a separate peace had been the text of the men's speeches.

"Listen, comrades ! " I called—everyone was "Comrade" in these days !—"I want to speak to you."

They gathered in a semi-circle. I marked out a square of ground with the toe of my boot.

"This square is Russia," I explained. "And this is Russia, last year, with a Tsar," placing a potato by the side of the square. "Now, we have no Tsar" picking up the potato and throwing it away—"but we have a President," placing another potato by the side of the square. "You see that whether I place one potato here, or another, this square which represents Russia remains the same."

"Precisely so, Mr. Commander."

“ Well, then, you see that Russia is always Russia, whether you have a Tsar or a President ? ”

“ Precisely so, Mr. Commander.”

And then I preached “ Russia for the Russians ” and words to that effect. . . . I write of these little incidents to show how one had to explain matters to these simple fellows. . . .

Then they worked cheerfully, stopping frequently to ask me questions about England. Did we have black soil in England or not ? . . . What sort of *kasha* did we grow—black or white ? . . . How much rye could we produce for black bread from each *desiatina* (two and a half acres) ? Did we put manure on the ground ? What did we sow and what did we reap and what sort of weather did we have in spring-time and summer and autumn ? . . . Most of the men had been small-holders before the war.

Each answer I gave brought forth another question—or, indeed, questions. I told that we had no *kasha*. That was incredible to them. What had we instead ? Did we grow rice ? . . . No, I said. . . . What then ? . . . And I told them what agricultural facts or “ near-facts ” I knew. . . .

Last year, the Russian soldier *as soldier* was a first class man. His discipline was excellent. He carried out all orders given to him quickly and cheerfully. He had a great respect for his officers and he showed it. He was humble—perhaps a little servile in addressing his superiors. True, he did not think for himself : but true also that he did not think of himself. He never complained. He accepted all conditions philosophically. “ Neechevo ! ” he said—“ It doesn’t matter,” “ Never Mind ” . . . Bad weather ? “ Neechevo ! ” . . . Bad food or little food ? “ Neechevo ! ” Wounded or sick ?—“ Neechevo ! ” . . .

I am certain that no other soldier could endure such hardships as the Russian soldier had to endure. The Russian army was smashed to the ground in 1915—but the Russian army rose up to fight again. I do not think another army could have existed after such terrible blows as the Russian army received.

“ When Madame Soukhomlinov was buying jewellery

and precious stones and rich toilettes and all the most expensive luxuries of life, the 20th Corps was dying in the snow. Their artillery was without shells. They had no cartridges for their rifles. Some of the men had no rifles. . . ."

That was in the early months of 1915. And later ?

. . . The artillery on the Rawka Front in Poland went away nearly two weeks before the infantry retreated. There were no shells.

Outside Warsaw many of the Russian guns had two shells each per day.

Two weeks after Warsaw fell I saw several long rows of cannon standing in a wood near a railway station—doing nothing. There were no shells.

A week later I saw in four days nearly 15,000 wounded Russians—none of whom had been injured by bayonets. The same week we took prisoner 800 wounded Germans—each of whom had been injured by bayonet alone.

. . . The criminal Russian Ministry sent the Russian men to fight with bayonets against artillery and machine guns. . . . The machine gun is the deadliest weapon in this war. Some Russian regiments had only four machine guns—one for each thousand men. Others had more—one machine gun per rota (company of 250 men)—sixteen per regiment. . . . To-day most platoons have two machine guns at least, so that each rota has eight and each regiment has 128. Russian officers have told me that after being nearly a year at the Front some of the men chanced to see a strange weapon.

"What is that ?" they asked.

"Machine gun."

"There, now . . . Machine gun . . . Interesting"—and they crowded round it with curiosity. . . .

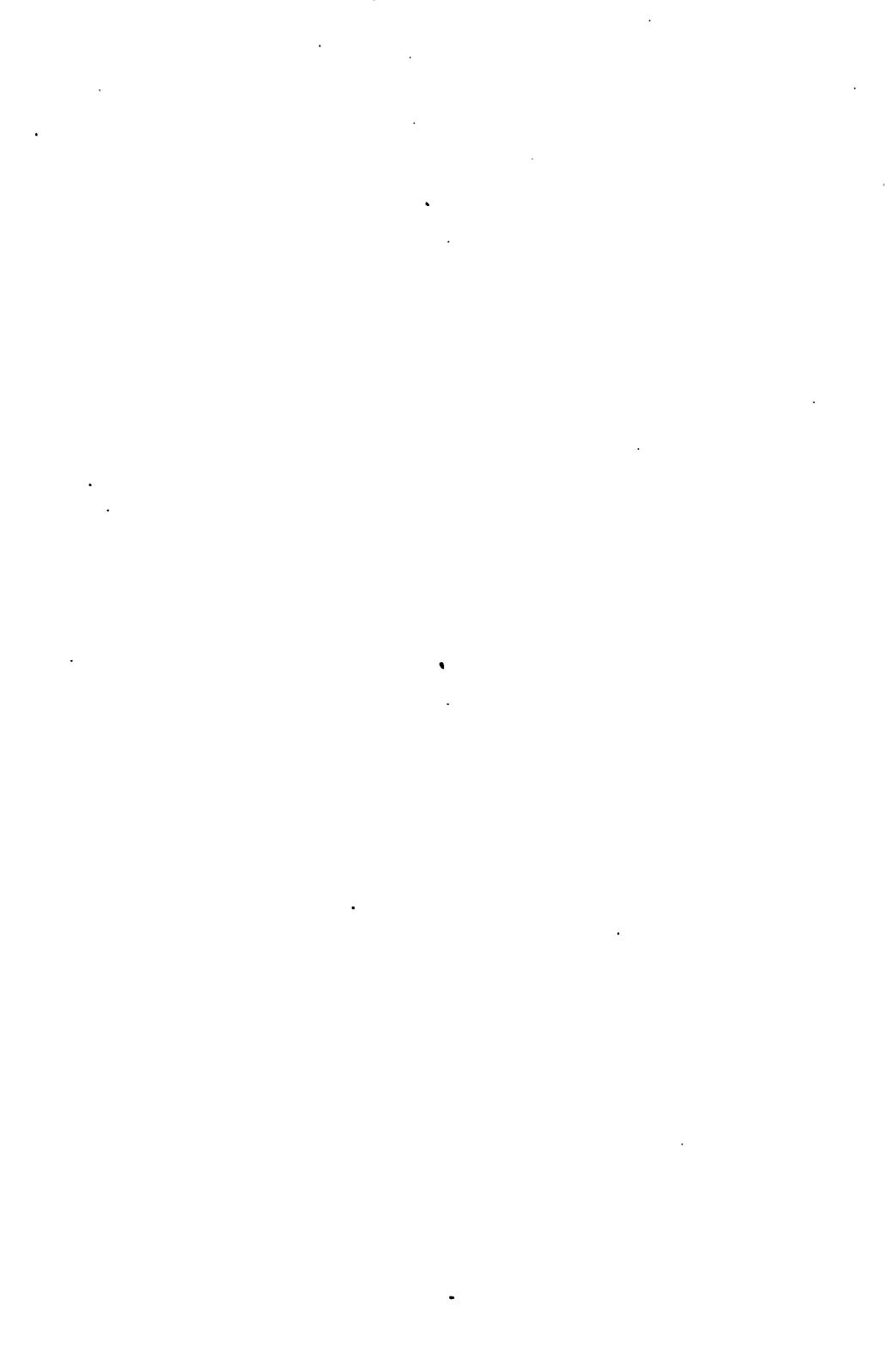
The Russian soldier was a very badly-off man, and although he said "Neechevo!" no one knew better than he did what terrible odds he was fighting against. He had a wonderful faith—but faith died, slowly as the war went on. What was the slogan of the Russian men? . . . "For Religion, the Tsar and the Native-

land" Beautiful words—a beautiful ideal. But ideals fade as realities are faced. . . . What was Religion?—Religion was prayers at eventide—but nights in the grim battle line followed. Religion was faith in God to save—but even men who prayed died horribly. Religion was a Holy Ikon round one's neck or else a tiny metal cross—but was it religion when one saw the sacred ikons splashed with blood and crosses lying on some dead men's breasts? The Tsar—the "Little Father"?—simply names. No father would let his sons be treated thus. . . . The Native-land? What was the Native-land? Was it their villages far far away from all the noise of war? The Native-land became in time the Ministers in Petrograd—the men who spoke and had to be obeyed: the men who sent the soldiers ill-equipped to war: the men who did not send the cartridges they required. . . . Faith died as time went on.

Then Freedom—and the Russian soldier lost his head. Freedom—all men were equal. Freedom—and one could do just as one liked. Freedom—why should an officer be obeyed? Freedom—then why should soldiers have to fight and suffer hurt, and lose their limbs, and die, perhaps, when the Millennium had arrived? Not for Religion—the Bible preached of love and forgiveness. Not for an Emperor—when Emperor was not. Then for the Native-land? Dreams came of home—of wife and children. Dreams came of peaceful villages and fields and quiet woods. . . . If France and England and all the other Allies wished to fight—then let them fight. Why in God's name should Russia have to fight as well?

Poor, dear Ivan Ivan'itch! What did you know of statesmen's words? What did you know of promises to be fulfilled? What did you know of Alliances and Treaties between State and State? Poor, dear Ivan Ivan'itch! You were not far enough removed from serfdom to know what Patriotism meant.

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